

**PRINCIPLED COMMITMENT:  
A PROGRAM FOR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COUPLES**

**A Tapestry of Faith Program for Adults**



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The personal altar activity in Workshop 10 and the couple altar activity in Workshop 11 were created by Anne Principe, Credentialed Religious Educator.

## PREFACE

Developed in response to Unitarian Universalist adults' desire to build strong relationships and our congregations' desire to meet that need, the eleven workshops of *Principled Commitment* provide avenues for growing in faith while nourishing committed partnership. Each workshop connects one of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations' seven Principles with a broad principle, quality, or attribute that participants can cultivate in their relationship.

To some, it may seem strange to connect our Principles with romantic partnership; to others, the connection may seem quite natural. In fact, the seven Principles that our congregations covenant to affirm and promote do not mention the word "love." Yet, in many ways, they are all about love. Imagine a love note based on the seven Principles:

*I love you. I recognize your worth and dignity. I seek to create a just, equitable, and compassionate relationship with you. I accept you and encourage your spiritual growth and your free and responsible search for truth and meaning. I respect your conscience and its role in our decision-making process. And loving you makes me want to transform the world: to create peace, liberty, and justice; to really respect and recognize our interdependence with all existence.*

In bringing together Unitarian Universalist values, relationship skills, covenanting, fellowship, and fun, this program offers participants the opportunity to build and enhance a principled commitment to one another.

As one in a series of *Tapestry of Faith* curricula for adults, *Principled Commitment* weaves Unitarian Universalist values, Principles, and Sources with four "strands": spiritual development, ethical development, Unitarian Universalist identity development, and faith development. Each of the strands is described below.

**Spiritual Development.** In the book *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, Scott Alexander defines spirituality as our relationship with the Spirit of Life, however we understand it to be. Our spirituality is our deep, reflective, and expressed response to the awe, wonder, joy, pain, and grief of being alive. In this sense, the *Tapestry of Faith* programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Know that they are lovable beings of infinite worth, imbued with powers of the soul and obligated to use their gifts, talents, and potentials in the service of life
- Appreciate the value of spiritual practice as a means of deepening faith and integrating beliefs and values with everyday life

**Ethical Development.** When we develop our ethics, we develop our moral values — our sense of what is right and wrong. We also enhance our ability to act on those values, overcoming oppressions and despair. In this sense, the *Tapestry of Faith* programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Realize that they are moral agents, capable of making a difference in the lives of other people, challenging structures of social and political oppression, and promoting the health and well-being of the planet
- Accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice, and compassion

**Unitarian Universalist Identity Development.** A person's participation in a Unitarian Universalist congregation does not automatically create Unitarian Universalist identity. Personal identification with Unitarian Universalism begins when people start to call themselves Unitarian Universalist and feel part of a Unitarian Universalist congregation or community. Identity is strengthened as individuals discover and resonate with the stories, symbols, and practices of Unitarian Universalism. As individuals find and give acceptance, as they cherish the community's people and values and messages, as they find sustenance for their holy hungers, they grow into Unitarian Universalists. In this sense, the *Tapestry of Faith* programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Affirm that they are part of a Unitarian Universalist religious heritage and community of faith that has value and provides resources for living
- Recognize the need for community, affirming the importance of families, relationships, and connections between and among the generations
- Accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice, and compassion

Faith Development. When we develop in faith, we develop as meaning-makers. Faith is not about accepting impossible ideas. Rather, faith is about embracing life's possibilities, growing in our sense of being "at home in the universe." Faith is practiced in relationships with others — it has personal dimensions, but it is best supported by a community of shared symbols, stories, values, and meaning. This strand — faith development — emphasizes each person's religious journey as a participant in a faith community and faith tradition, and each person's lifelong process of bringing head, heart, and hands to what is of ultimate meaning and value.

Each of these strands is woven, to some degree, in each of the *Principled Commitment* workshops, even though their primary focus lifts up the Unitarian Universalist Identity Development and Ethical Development strands most often.

— Sarah Gibb Millspaugh, Developmental Editor, Unitarian Universalist Association Adult Programs Director

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## THE PROGRAM

*In this generous world, love will come our way now and then. But if we do not plant the love that we have in the firm soil of living relationship, we may be in danger of supposing that it will grow on its own, without our nurture or our small acts of concern. Therefore, let us tend to our small plots, that this harvest may flourish, enough to share not only with our neighbors, but with our enemies as well.*

— Jake Bohstedt Morrill, contemporary Unitarian Universalist minister

*Principled Commitment* is a flexible, 22-hour program that can be tailored to a group's needs. The 11 two-hour workshops offer information, facilitated discussions, and in-class and take-home activities. Discussions help participants explore their own ideas and learn from others' perspectives. Activities are designed to enhance interaction between partners and among members of the larger group.

*Principled Commitment* is appropriate for adult couples seeking to enhance their committed, healthy, long-term relationships. The workshops are designed primarily for couples of all sexual orientations who have made vows or pledged to spend their lives together. It is not designed for couples considering engagement, though engaged couples may find the course valuable. This workshop series does not provide couples therapy; couples with serious relationship issues should speak to their minister or another counseling professional.

The mission of *Principled Commitment* is to enhance and support long-term, committed relationships that reflect the values of Unitarian Universalism. Unitarian Universalist congregations can provide a nurturing environment for interpersonal relationships, and our Principles provide an excellent framework to support and enrich marriages and other blessed unions between loving partners.

*Principled Commitment* seeks to deepen participants' ethical, spiritual, faith, and Unitarian Universalist identity development. This is accomplished through the theme and activities of each workshop.

## GOALS

Participants will:

- Nurture the health of their relationships
- Learn skills to build and strengthen healthy relationships

- Benefit from the wisdom and experience of other participants
- Interact and communicate more effectively with their partners
- Strengthen their Unitarian Universalist identity

Congregations will:

- Be resources for couples' enrichment
- Experience stronger interpersonal bonds among members
- Gain opportunities for community outreach

## LEADERS

Effective co-leaders are essential to the success of the *Principled Commitment* program. Leaders will present information while helping participants discover and express their own ideas and answers. They may be laypersons or clergy, and neither experience in facilitation nor expertise in relationships is necessary. Congregations are encouraged to select leaders of different genders so that participants benefit from varied perspectives.

Leaders will be most effective if they have the following strengths:

- Respect for individuals, regardless of race, religion, ability, sexual identity or orientation, or type of relationship in which they are engaged
- Ability to create a supportive group environment
- Appreciation of the lay ministry opportunities afforded by the program
- Time and willingness to prepare thoroughly for each workshop and to take appropriate action in the event of unexpected cancellations
- Ability and commitment to maintaining the curriculum's focus on healthy relationships
- Commitment to Unitarian Universalist Principles and to the faith component of this curriculum
- Confidence to be comfortable speaking to a group of adults
- Willingness to support healthy group process by reinforcing ground rules politely and confidently

## PARTICIPANTS

This program is best suited to groups of four to ten couples, or a maximum of 20 participants.

Committed couples of all sexual orientations are welcome to participate. Those who have made vows or pledged to spend their lives together will find the workshops most suited to them. Participants should be made aware that the workshops are designed to enhance healthy relationships, not to "fix" troubled ones.

### Integrating All Participants

People of all ages have a range of abilities and disabilities. Adults become more and more likely to live with disability as they age. The sample registration form (Leader Resource 2 in Workshop 1) asks individual participants to identify any particular disability-related accommodations they will need. *Principled Commitment* provides leaders with resources for responding to some of the most common needs: Workshop 1, Leader Resource 5, for including people who are hard of hearing and who are deaf, Workshop 1, Leader Resource 6, for including people with low vision and who are blind, and Workshop 1, Leader Resource 7, for including people with limited mobility, including those in wheelchairs. The Unitarian Universalist Association's website and staff can offer guidance for inclusion of people with other disabilities. Consult the [Disability & Accessibility section of UUA.org](#). In addition, some activities contain specific accessibilities guidance under the heading "Including All Participants."

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

*Principled Commitment* consists of eleven two-hour workshops, including a celebratory closure. These workshops can be offered one or two at a time over a period of weeks.

The workshops can also be combined and presented during one or two weekend retreats. Keep in mind, however, that the condensed time frame will decrease opportunities for couples to reflect on topics discussed during workshops. For use in a retreat setting, the opening, check-in, and closing activities can be condensed. A sample retreat schedule can be found in Leader Resource 4, Leading *Principled Commitment* as a Retreat.

Each of *Principled Commitment's* workshops has a consistent structure, as outlined below.

### Introduction

The introduction provides a short summary of the workshop's content, along with guidance for leaders about implementing the workshop.

### Goals

The Goals section provides general outcomes toward which the workshop is geared. As you plan a workshop, apply your knowledge of your group, the time and space

you have available, and your own strengths and interests as co-leaders to determine the most important and achievable goals for the workshop and the activities that will best serve those goals.

### Learning Objectives

The Learning Objectives section describes specific participant outcomes that the workshop activities are designed to facilitate. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which the *Principled Commitment* program's larger, "big-picture" goals are achieved. If particular learning objectives appeal to you as important for your group, make sure you select the activities for this workshop that address these outcomes.

### Workshop-at-a-Glance

The "Workshop-at-a-Glance" table lists the workshop activities in order and provides an estimated time for completing each activity.

Workshop-at-a-Glance is not a road map that you must follow. Rather, use it as a menu for planning the workshop. You will decide which elements to use and how to combine these to best suit your group, your meeting space, and the amount of time you have.

Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. Whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than in a small group. Remember to consider the time you will need to relocate participants to another area of your meeting room.

### Spiritual Preparation

Each workshop provides suggestions that leaders may use to prepare themselves for leading the workshop. Take advantage of these suggestions as a way to experience aspects of the *Principled Commitment* program yourself, to grow spiritually, and to grow as a leader.

### Workshop Plan

The workshop plan presents every element of the workshop and a Resources section. The Resources section includes additional sources to help you, the leader, further explore the workshop topics. The workshop elements are:

**Welcoming and Entering.** This section offers steps for welcoming participants as they arrive. It is recommended that the preparations in each Welcoming and Entering section be completed 15 minutes before each workshop's scheduled beginning.

**Opening.** Each workshop begins with a short opening worship, including a welcome, chalice-lighting ritual, reflection on a guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle,



guided meditation, and readings. Take the liberty you need to shape your opening ritual to suit your group, any space limitations, and the culture and practices of your congregation.

**Activities.** Up to seven activities form the core content of each workshop. The variety of activities presented within each workshop helps you address different learning styles you may find among your participants.

Presenting the activities in the sequence suggested for each workshop will help you provide a coherent learning experience. In general, the suggested sequence balances listening with talking and complements individual exploration with small group or whole group exploration.

Each workshop includes a separate section of alternate activities. You may choose to substitute any of these for some of the workshop's core activities. Alternate activities can also be used to build longer workshops of up to three hours.

Select activities that you feel best suit the widest range of participants' interests and will work well for you and your group. Keep in mind your participants' journey of learning and the benefits of a well-paced workshop that includes different kinds of activities. If you are using alternate activities, take care to sequence them in an order that creates a balanced flow throughout the workshop.

The following information is provided for activities:

- *Materials for Activity.* This checklist tells you the supplies you will need.
- *Preparation for Activity.* Review the "to do" list for each activity at least one week ahead of a workshop. If your group meets less frequently than weekly, review the preparation items several weeks ahead. The list identifies all the advance work you need to do for the activity, such as writing a list of questions on newsprint or arranging supplies just before your participants arrive.
- *Description of Activity.* This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity with your group. Read the activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so that you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you are leading your group, you can use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.
- *Including All Participants.* Some activities offer specific accessibility guidance under the heading "Including All Participants." This section

appears only in activities that have unusual physical circumstances or for which leaders would benefit from a special reminder about inclusion. Please consult Workshop 1, Leader Resources 5, 6, and 7 for general guidelines to help you respond to some of the most common accessibility needs.

**Closing.** Each workshop offers a closing ritual that signals the end of your group's time together. During the closing, you will introduce the workshop's Taking It Home ideas, invite participants to share briefly, offer closing words, and extinguish the chalice. Like the opening, the closing of a workshop grounds the experience in ritual. Use the curriculum as a resource to shape a closing that fits your group and the culture and practices of your congregation.

**Leader Reflection and Planning.** This section provides questions to help co-leaders process the workshop after it is concluded and use their reflections to shape future workshops.

**Taking It Home.** The Taking It Home resources for each workshop are designed to help couples extend their *Principled Commitment* experiences. These "Affection Connection" activities include conversation topics, journaling assignments, and other ideas for incorporating learnings from the workshop into couples' daily lives — at home, in their workplaces, in their congregations, and as members of other communities to which they may belong. Taking It Home is designed to be inclusive of all couples in any family configuration.

After you download the Taking It Home section, you can print out and photocopy it "as is" for participants to bring home, or you may customize it first.

**Alternate Activities.** As described earlier, most workshops feature one or more alternate activities. You can use these to extend the total time of the workshops or substitute them for core workshop activities. Sometimes the alternate activities are simpler to implement than the core activities. Materials checklists, preparation steps, and descriptions for alternate activities appear in the same format as they do in the core activities.

Each workshop includes an alternate activity called "Faith in Action." These activities are designed to give participants an opportunity to put their Unitarian Universalist faith into action by articulating their faith, serving their congregation, or engaging in collective social action.

**Resources.** In a workshop's Resources section, you can find all the handouts and other materials you will need to lead every element of the workshop. You will also find

supplemental resources to help you, the leader, further explore the workshop topics.

- *Handouts.* Under this heading, find any material that you need to print out and photocopy for all participants to use in the workshop.
- *Leader Resources.* These materials, such as guided meditations, are for the leader's use during the workshop.
- *Find Out More.* Under this heading, find a list of books, videos, websites, and other resources to help you learn more about the workshop topics.

## LEADER GUIDELINES

Experienced workshop leaders will no doubt have their own tried and true techniques, but first-time leaders may benefit from the following suggestions:

- *Understand your role.* This is an opportunity for you to inspire personal growth within yourself and among workshop participants. As a facilitator, your role is not to lecture, but to help participants find their own answers. During activities, circulate around the room to offer assistance or to help move discussions forward.
- *Avoid counseling.* The workshops are not an occasion for couples therapy. Personal issues may come up during the course of discussions and can be acknowledged. For example, you might say, "I can hear that you feel upset, and I encourage you and your partner to explore that issue outside of the workshop." Couples needing to work through major personal issues and problems will be better served by private counseling or consultation with a minister.
- *Build trust and offer comfort.* Learn all participants' names as quickly as possible and practice active listening. (See "Listen" below.) Invite participants to take comfort breaks as needed.
- *Be prepared.* Use the Spiritual Preparation and Leader Reflection and Planning sections in each workshop.
- *Encourage participation.* *Principled Commitment* is not intended to be a lecture series. Invite everyone to participate in discussions and activities, with one caveat: never insist that anyone speak in front of the group. Let participants know they may "pass" their speaking opportunity to another person.
- *Respect participants' time.* Begin and end each workshop promptly. Do not repeat material for

people who arrive late; doing so reinforces their behavior and penalizes those who arrive on time. Consider speaking privately with habitual latecomers to explain the effect their late arrival has on others.

- *Follow the workshop agenda.* The basic content can be covered within two hours. Alternate activities and optional discussion topics may be added if time allows or if participants wish to meet for longer or additional workshops. Approximately 45 minutes before the scheduled end of the workshop, check to see whether the remaining activities can be completed on time. If not, you may want to shorten or eliminate an activity. The closing is an exception, as it is a good way to wrap up each workshop. If you wish to continue an activity or discussion past the regular ending time, consider telling participants how much additional time is needed and offering them the option to stay or to leave at the usual time.
- *Create a "parking lot."* Discussions can quickly become sidetracked from the main topic, and many times, these new directions are worth exploring. In the interest of time management, you may wish to jot a few words about the new topic on a self-adhesive note and post it on a wall — the group's "parking lot" for ideas. If time allows at the end of the workshop, return to the parking lot and ask participants whether they would like to discuss the issue(s) posted.
- *Remain neutral.* If conflict arises, remain neutral. Listen to and acknowledge each point of view before reminding participants that few absolutes exist within human relationships. Then move the discussion along to the next topic or activity.
- *Circulate during activities.* As activities are being completed, circulate around the room to ensure that participants understand the tasks. Offer input when appropriate.
- *Communicate between workshops.* You may need to communicate with participants to remind them of upcoming meeting dates and times, to prompt them to bring materials needed for workshops, to alert participants of cancellations due to weather emergencies or other circumstances, and to gain feedback and answer questions.

Leaders who take the following steps may find that they have enhanced the workshop experience for themselves and their participants:

Review. Read the curriculum to become familiar with it. Choose the activities, optional discussion topics, and at-home assignments that will suit your participants' needs and the time allotted for the workshop.

Gather. Each workshop includes a list of materials needed.

Plan. Discuss with your co-leader who will lead each part of the workshop's discussion and activities. This will help the workshop run smoothly.

Communicate. Call or send notes to participants to remind them when and where the workshop will be held and whether they need to bring anything special, such as art supplies. If participants have agreed to take turns bringing refreshments, remind hosts when it is their turn.

Anticipate. The day before each workshop, check weather reports, ensure that the meeting room remains reserved for you, and touch base with your co-leader to ensure that every detail has been addressed.

Listen. The practice of active listening enhances understanding and lets speakers know they are being heard. Try the following techniques for active listening. It is not necessary to employ every technique repeatedly; restating every point a speaker makes, for instance, would be annoying rather than affirming.

- *Make eye contact.* Look directly at the person who is speaking, nodding your head to acknowledge comments being made.
- *Engage physically.* Face the speaker with uncrossed legs and arms, and lean toward the speaker. Avoid body language that shows disinterest, such as fidgeting or yawning.
- *Restate.* Reiterate the speaker's main points to ensure that you understand them.
- *Summarize.* Outline the speaker's main ideas.
- *Ask.* Request additional information or clarification.
- *Give feedback.* Show how you can relate to the speaker's experience or ideas.
- *Offer support.* Respond compassionately, even if you disagree.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The following suggestions are offered to ease the implementation of this program. Each congregation has its own process, so use whichever suggestions are applicable to your situation.

- *Gain approval.* Many congregations have decision-making processes that govern adult

program offerings. Please check your policies prior to implementing *Principled Commitment*.

- *Establish parameters.* Will the program be offered on eleven consecutive weeks? Monthly, over the course of the year? Will only selected workshops be offered? Who may register for the program — only adult congregation members, or will the larger community be invited to participate? Will a registration fee be charged, and if so, how much?
- *Set the dates and times.* Refer to your congregational calendar to avoid conflicts whenever possible.
- *Select a workshop location.* See "Space and Accessibility" below.
- *Develop a registration process.* Some congregations may simply ask participants to call and leave their names, phone numbers, and accessibility needs; others may prefer a more formal process. Leader Resource 2 is a sample registration form. If you charge a fee, decide how payment will be collected. Consider setting a registration deadline. If response is greater than anticipated, you may need to split the group into two sections and engage co-leaders for each section. Leader Resource 3 is a sample letter that can be sent to welcome couples who have registered for the program.
- *Promote the program.* Leader Resource 1 includes tips on promoting *Principled Commitment* within the congregation and larger community.

### Space and Accessibility

The room used for *Principled Commitment* workshops should be comfortable and accessible to people with disabilities. Tables will be necessary for some activities, and you will need space for a chalice, refreshments (if served), and an easel, positioned where it can be seen easily by all participants. A music player may be helpful for some activities.

To enhance participants' experience and limit distractions, set up a space that offers privacy to the group, as well as a separate room for child care with a qualified provider. In addition, place a sign at the room entrance to limit interruptions by alerting others that a workshop is in session.

Ideally, you will have other rooms available nearby to use as "breakout" rooms if some couples or small groups need to be in a quiet or private space for their discussions.

Because ours is a faith community that welcomes all people, we have an obligation to plan congregational meetings and activities, workshops, and religious education classes so that people of all abilities can participate. Here are some things to think about as you plan *Principled Commitment*:

- *Accessibility inside and outside.* Accessibility includes available parking, or a volunteer "valet" parking service if there is insufficient accessible parking, as well as a clear path of travel into and through the facility. Accessibility can be a problem if an event is held in someone's home. If overnight stays are included, accessible accommodations should be a consideration as well.
- *Adequate lighting level.* Dimming or extinguishing the lights to create a particular mood may make it difficult for some people to see written materials or for people who are hard of hearing to use lip reading to help them understand what people are saying.
- *Emergency evacuation.* Make sure there is a predetermined evacuation plan for people who have limited movement. Do not assume that every person who has a disability will need help in an evacuation; always ask before providing assistance.

## BEFORE YOU START

- *Download the curriculum.* If you have not already done so, go to the [Principled Commitment web page](#) and scroll to the bottom of the page, where you will find links and directions for downloading *Principled Commitment* to your computer.
- *Edit the curriculum and handouts to suit your needs.* Once you have downloaded and saved the curriculum, open it in your word processing program. Here you can cut, paste, reword, and create your own customized lesson plans and handouts for each workshop.
- *Print the lesson plans, leader resources, and handouts.* Print what you, your co-leader, and participants will need for your first workshop. Read it over, make the words your own, and go!

May this curriculum be blessed by your talents and thoughtfulness as you create meaningful, deepening experiences for the couples in your midst.

## PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations 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.

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the 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 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.

## FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

# WORKSHOP 1: COVENANT

## INTRODUCTION

*It takes years to marry completely two hearts,  
even the most loving and well assorted. A happy  
wedlock is a long falling in love.*  
— Theodore Parker, nineteenth-century  
Unitarian minister

"Covenant" has been called the foundation of our Unitarian Universalist religious movement. It is covenant, rather than creed, that binds members together in a congregation and binds congregations together as the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Covenant is also central to committed relationships. Whether spoken as vows or written like a contract, a couple's covenant articulates the highest intentions of both partners, binding them in mutual agreement and good faith. Covenants are not just for wedding ceremonies and services of union — covenants can be revisited and reaffirmed throughout the "long falling in love" of a long-term committed relationship. This introductory workshop launches participants on the process of articulating their intentions and creating a covenant together, which will be shared and affirmed at the conclusion of the program.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
Third Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth

This workshop establishes a foundation for the *Principled Commitment* program, promoting covenants between couples and among participants. Safety, trust, and good intention create space for mutual acceptance and encouragement to personal and spiritual growth.

### Considerations for Adaptation

Alternate Activity 2, Sharing Couple Stories, fosters immediate group bonding. Consider extending the length of this initial workshop so that you can offer this activity in addition to the others. You may also wish to provide additional time for couples to discuss and complete Handout 5, Couple Covenant Worksheet; if so, Alternate Activity 3 provides instructions for extending this discussion. A three-hour workshop would provide enough time for both a longer covenant discussion and couple stories.

## GOALS

This workshop will:

- Introduce participants to the *Principled Commitment* program
- Introduce participants to one another and establish trust within the group
- Foster connections between participants
- Provide an opportunity for couples to reflect on the intentions they bring to their relationships and the foundational agreements they have made with their partners

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Introduce themselves and meet other participants
- Share their expectations for the program
- Covenant with the group regarding norms for participation
- Develop ideas for a couple covenant

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	15
Activity 1: Participant Introductions	10
Activity 2: Getting Acquainted	15
Activity 3: Program Overview	10
Activity 4: Expectations	10
Activity 5: Housekeeping	5
Activity 6: Group Covenant	15
Activity 7: Couple Covenant	35
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Covenant	20
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Couple Stories	30

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

This first session will focus on getting acquainted and working on both a group covenant and covenants for each individual couple. If you are working with a co-leader, think about what a covenant between you might include. What expectations do you have for one another as co-leaders? This is a good time to decide how you as leaders remain in contact with one another, when you will do your planning, and who has the main responsibility for each activity in the workshop. You may also want to discuss what expectations you both have for the group and how you will express those expectations at your first session.

Consider the guiding Principle for this session, "Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth." Take a moment to reflect on how covenants can manifest acceptance of others and help to encourage spiritual growth. Have you had any personal experience with covenants? How can your experiences assist the couples in their covenant writing?



# WELCOMING AND ENTERING

## Materials for Activity

- Pocket folder for each participant
- Photocopies of the following handouts (one per participant):
  - Handout 1: [Getting Acquainted](#)
  - Handout 2: [Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources](#)
  - Handout 3: [Workshop Descriptions and Schedule](#)
  - Handout 4: [Suggested Group Covenant](#)
  - Handout 5: [Couple Covenant Worksheet](#)
- Name tags (two per person)
- Markers for name tags
- Leader Resource 8: [Participant Contact Information](#)
- Pen(s) or pencil(s) (one or more)
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Refreshments (see Preparation)

## Preparation for Activity

- Every workshop involves preparation, but preparing is especially important the first time because the extra effort you put in now will help the entire program flow more smoothly.
- Review the entire curriculum so that you can answer questions about it or know where to find answers.
- Add the dates and times of each workshop to Handout 3, Workshop Description and Schedule.
- Make a photocopy of the handouts listed under Materials and place them in a pocket folder for each participant.
- Print out Leader Resource 8, Participant Contact Information. Place it, along with the pen(s) or pencil(s), where participants can sign in when they enter the workshop. Place name tags and markers nearby.

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Provide light refreshments, as you are able, to encourage a comfortable social atmosphere from the start. Refreshments can range from coffee and tea to light snacks, depending on the number of participants and the time of day. Regular meals are not recommended, as the focus on food may detract from the workshop content.

## Description of Activity

As participants arrive, welcome them with a folder. Ask them to put their name on two name tags, one to wear and one to put on their pocket folder.

Ask participants to sign in on the Participant Contact Information sheet (Leader Resource 8). Invite them to serve themselves refreshments. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

At the appointed time, start the workshop promptly, without waiting for latecomers. By doing so, you will reward participants who arrive on time and set a positive tone for future workshops.

## Including All Participants

Encourage participants to speak with you about any accessibility needs they have and how you might accommodate them (for example, with large-print handouts or a seat close to the leader). Asking participants about their accessibility needs enables you to offer a more positive experience for them during the *Principled Commitment* workshops. See the introduction to this curriculum for information about accessibility for adults of all physical abilities.

# OPENING (15 MINUTES)

## Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 10: [Order of Service – Covenant](#)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Select a reading that relates to the third Principle. In *Singing the Living Tradition*, readings 439, 486, and 495 are suitable. If a responsive reading is chosen, provide additional hymnbooks as needed.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 10, Order of Service — Covenant, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Introduce yourselves as leaders, and invite participants to take turns briefly introducing themselves. Suggest that they include their name and a sentence or two about their connection to the congregation or community.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to participants' volume, and ask those who speak softly to speak louder.

## ACTIVITY 2: GETTING ACQUAINTED (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1: [Getting Acquainted](#) (included in this document) (already in participants' folders)
- Pens or pencils (at least one per participant)

### Preparation for Activity

- Select four statements from the list below to read to participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity introduces individuals in the group to one another.

Ask participants to find Handout 1, *Getting Acquainted*, from their folders. Offer these instructions:

In the middle of the square, write the name you would like to be called by this group.

Using words, symbols, or pictures, respond to the following statements by putting one answer in each corner of the square. [Note to leaders: Read four statements only.]

- A quality I aspire to in my relationship is . . .
- Something people don't know about me that I would like to share is . . .
- My partner and I met in . . . [year].
- My hero/heroine is . . .
- My partner's name is . . .
- My favorite hobby is . . .
- My passion is . . .
- I love . . .
- I am proud of . . .

Now think of four things about yourself — four attributes or qualities — that you like. Write each of those qualities or attributes along one side of the square.

Once participants have completed their squares, ask them to partner with someone they don't know well and share their answers for about three minutes each.

If there is time, ask participants to repeat the process with a new person.

## ACTIVITY 3: PROGRAM OVERVIEW (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2: [Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources](#) (included in this document) (already in participants' folders)
- Handout 3: [Workshop Descriptions and Schedule](#) (included in this document) (already in participants' folders)
- A schedule of all the workshops on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

## Preparation for Activity

- Create a newsprint chart or digital slide of the program schedule, including the workshop topics, dates, and times. You may use Handout 3 as a guide.

## Description of Activity

Explain the program to participants, using these or similar words:

This program offers an opportunity to explore and expand healthy, loving relationships. The time you and your partner spend together in these workshops is an investment in your relationship.

Each person is encouraged to participate freely and share.

As with any activity, the more effort that is put into this time together, the greater the benefit to individuals, couples, and the entire group.

Each workshop includes "Taking it Home" handouts with activities called "Affection Connection" that are to be completed at home. You won't be asked to turn them in. They are designed to encourage continued reflection and sharing between workshops.

Ask participants to take Handouts 2 and 3 out of their folders. Explain that Handout 2 includes the Principles that our Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote. Handout 3 is an overview of the *Principled Commitment* program that describes each workshop and links it to a Principle. Invite questions about the program's emphasis and content.

Encourage participants to further review the handouts at home.

## ACTIVITY 4: EXPECTATIONS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape

### Description of Activity

This brainstorming exercise gives participants an opportunity to express their hopes for the program.

Ask participants:

- What are your expectations for the *Principled Commitment* program?

- What do you hope to experience or accomplish, or what do you hope will take place in general, as a result of your time in the workshops?

Allow participants to brainstorm, capturing their thoughts on newsprint. When finished, post the list on the wall. You may want to comment on the list.

Save the newsprint list for the final workshop.

### Including All Participants

Use bold, dark-colored markers for maximum readability.

Take care to face participants, rather than the easel, when speaking. It works best to have one co-leader take notes on newsprint while the other leads the discussion.

## ACTIVITY 5: HOUSEKEEPING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 9: [Refreshment Sign-up Sheet](#) (included in this document)
- Pen or pencil

### Preparation for Activity

- Research your site to learn which bathrooms are accessible for people with physical disabilities and/or transgender identities.
- Prepare a copy of Leader Resource 9, Refreshment Sign-up Sheet, by filling in the dates for upcoming workshops.

### Description of Activity

Logistical details will help make the workshops run smoothly. Here are some recommendations of material to cover. You may have other ideas as well.

### Contact Information

Explain that you asked participants to complete the contact information sheet earlier because occasions may arise when class must be postponed due to inclement weather or other reasons.

Explain that sometimes participants wish to contact each other outside of the workshops, and you can help them do that by distributing copies of the contact list at the next workshop. Invite individuals to speak to you privately during the break or after this workshop if they would prefer to remove their information from the distributed list.

### Hospitality

Ask participants whether they would like to take turns bringing refreshments at upcoming workshops. If so,

place the Refreshment Sign-up Sheet in a prominent location and encourage participants to sign up during a break or after the workshop concludes. Request that participants make a note of the date they volunteered to bring refreshments. You may wish to send a reminder note before each workshop.

#### Other Details

Inform participants where restrooms are located, and note which are accessible to people of all physical abilities and gender identities.

Explain how to contact the leaders, emphasize the importance of regular attendance, and offer any other relevant logistical details.

This might be a good time for a short break in your workshop.

## ACTIVITY 6: GROUP COVENANT (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2: [Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources](#) (included in this document) (already in participants' folders)
- Handout 4: Suggested Group Covenant (already in participants' folders)
- Newsprint sheet with suggested group covenant (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Markers
- Optional: Poster or photocopies of the covenant used in your congregation's worship services (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the text of Handout 4, Suggested Group Covenant, on a sheet of newsprint. Leave space for the group's additions, modifications, and signatures.
- If your congregation has a covenant or a "bond of union" that it recites each week in worship, obtain a copy of it. Make enough photocopies for each individual or couple to have one, or write the covenant on a poster or sheet of newsprint.

### Description of Activity

If applicable, display or hand out the covenant used in your congregation's worship services. Invite participants to recite it together.

Ask participants:

- What is a covenant?

After discussion, note that the idea of covenant has deep religious and secular roots. It is a formal and binding agreement made between one or more individuals or the members of a group.

Ask participants to refer to Handout 2, Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources, and find references to the word "covenant." Explain that the Principles are indeed a covenant made between Unitarian Universalist congregations. The Principles are what the congregations covenant to "affirm and promote."

Introduce the group covenant process with these or similar words:

Today we will have the opportunity to create covenants, both as a group and as couples. In Unitarian Universalist environments, covenants are often used to help groups work together. A covenant is a set of agreements about our relationship to one another. The spirit of the document is stronger than its physical form.

Rebecca Parker, a Unitarian Universalist theologian, states that "we inherit covenant before we create covenant." When we enter a congregation's community, we recognize that the covenant has been shaped by the experience of those who have gone before.

And so, in making a covenant for our group, we have a "Suggested Group Covenant" to start with. These suggestions are taken from the experience of workshop-going Unitarian Universalist adults who came before us. They will help us define the covenant that will shape our interactions in this program.

Display the "Suggested Group Covenant" poster or newsprint that you prepared in advance. Ask participants to find Handout 4, Suggested Group Covenant, from their folders. Read each statement aloud, then ask:

- Would you like to make changes or additions to the list? [If so, discuss the changes.]
- Does everyone feel comfortable trying to uphold this covenant to the best of his/her ability?

Invite participants to sign, initial, or make a mark on the newsprint under the covenant. Leave the sheet up during the rest of this session, and save it so that you can post it at future workshops.

## ACTIVITY 7: COUPLE COVENANT (35 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 5: [Couple Covenant Worksheet](#) (included in this document) (already in participants' folders)
- Pens or pencils (one per participant)
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### Description of Activity

This activity will help participants examine and clarify their own intentions and share them with their partners, with whom they will create a mutual covenant. Couples will be able to refer to and expand upon their covenants during upcoming workshops, using their covenants to guide them through the process of enhancing their relationships.

Explain that the *Principled Commitment* program offers an opportunity for couples to reaffirm, expand, or enhance the covenants they may have already made together.

Ask participants to pair up with their spouse or partner and to take Handout 5, Couple Covenant Worksheet, out of their folders. Review the handout and provide instructions for its completion using these or similar words:

You and your partner will work together on the first part of the worksheet. Spend a few minutes recalling the words and spirit of any covenants that you have made together about the meaning and content of your relationship. These can include marriage vows or other solemn rituals and promises. (If you and your partner have not made a covenant or anything like it, you can begin to talk about what you might like the content of a future covenant to be.)

In the second part, you and your partner will work separately. Complete the statements about your individual, personal intentions, not what you expect from your partner. Consider not only intentions themselves, but also the underlying actions that can support these intentions.

Next, you and your partner will share your individual intentions with one another. In response, you will write about how you can help your partner fulfill his/her intentions in the coming weeks.

Finally, you and your partner will work together to brainstorm some ideas for a covenant of intention, one you might affirm together by the end of the Principled Commitment program.

Allow approximately five minutes for each section of the worksheet, signaling when it is time to move on to the next section. Couples may feel rushed. If they do, explain that the worksheets can be continued at home and that covenant work will continue in future workshops.

Pay particular attention to participants who have difficulty with or are unable to complete this exercise. Sometimes the struggle may be a matter of time limits or life pressures. In other cases, resistance to this activity may indicate a more complicated relational dynamic that is beyond the scope of this program. If that is the case, the dynamic may become more apparent as the program progresses. Be prepared to supportively guide couples in need of therapeutic intervention to the congregation's minister or a therapist outside the workshop. Remember that any couple attending the class is expressing care for their relationship.

At the conclusion of the worksheet exercise, reunite the large group for a few minutes of discussion. Ask:

- How did it feel to work on this activity?
- How many of us typically find time in our relationship to discuss intention? In what ways can this type of discussion be incorporated into our regular lives as couples?
- Would any couple like to share some of the words they wrote — intentions or covenant?

Encourage participants to keep their worksheets for future reference.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

## Description of Activity

Each workshop needs some form of closure. The closings in *Principled Commitment* follow a basic pattern that can be adapted to suit your group.

Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas or skills discussed in this workshop. As the leader, you may not be able to answer every question, so encourage participants to continue exploring these ideas as individuals and couples.

Distribute the Taking it Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about his/her experience of the workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read these closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Did participants seem to get acquainted in this workshop? If not, how might you add another activity at the start of the next workshop to help participants feel more comfortable with one another?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?

Be sure to save the newsprint list from Activity 4, Expectations, so that participants can return to their expectations in Workshop 11. Save the group covenant from Activity 6 so you can post it at future workshops.

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

### Affection Connection — Covenant

Extend your exploration of covenants by trying one or more of these activities on your own.

#### For Couples: Reviewing Your Covenant

Take some time to review your couple covenant together. Discuss how an outsider might observe your relationship if the covenant is followed. Would that be a change? How might the relationship flourish by following the covenant? Are there other statements that you think need to be added to the covenant?

#### For Couples: Expanding Your Covenant

Talk with your partner about ways you could expand your couple covenant to address the ways you relate with other people — co-workers, friends, and family members. Consider: Are there conflicts or difficulties that frequently arise in your relationships with these other people? Using your couple covenant as a guide, how might those difficulties be resolved? Are there additional statements that should be added to cover these relationships?

#### For Families: Writing a Family Covenant

Share your couple covenant with your children and/or other members of your family. Talk about what covenants are, and ask family members what they might like to include in a family covenant. You may choose to write a covenant designed for the whole family, one you can refer to in times of harmony and times of conflict.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — COVENANT (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Written examples of covenants from your congregation (one copy per participant) (see Preparation)
- Blank paper (at least one sheet per small group)
- Pencils or pens (at least one per small group)



## Preparation for Activity

- Ask various groups in the congregation — such as small group ministry groups, youth groups, committees, or children's classes — whether they would be willing to share their covenants with your workshop participants. These may be covenants of purpose or covenants of behavior, as long as they are currently being used within your congregation's community.
- If you are unable to find written covenants within your congregation, examples can be found on these websites: the [Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network](http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/covenants.html) (at [www.smallgroupministry.net/public/covenants.html](http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/covenants.html)) and [First Unitarian Church of Victoria](http://www.jameslove.com/covenant3.htm) (at [www.jameslove.com/covenant3.htm](http://www.jameslove.com/covenant3.htm)).
- Create a printed handout with examples of covenants, and photocopy it for participants.

## Description of Activity

Invite participants to form small groups of two to three couples each. Distribute the handout you have created with examples of covenants. Explain that this activity will invite the group to think about how they can share their understanding of covenant with the rest of the congregation.

Ask participants to review the covenant examples, and ask:

- How do each of these covenants reflect our third Principle, "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth"?
- Are there ways to improve these covenants?
- How do, or how might, groups that you participate in — within the congregation, in the workplace, or in social circles — benefit from a covenant?

Invite groups to spend ten minutes reflecting and brainstorming. Ask the small groups to take notes on their discussion.

Invite each group to spend one or two minutes reporting back to large group. After groups have shared, ask:

- What from this conversation might you take with you into your work with other parts of the congregation?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING COUPLE STORIES (30 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

This activity can replace Activity 2, Getting Acquainted, or can be used in addition to Activity 2.

Invite each couple to introduce themselves as a couple. They may wish to tell the group who they are, how long they've been together, where they've lived, whether they have children or live with other family members, what hobbies they enjoy together, or other relevant information.

Set a time limit for each couple's sharing so that this activity does not last longer than thirty minutes. You may wish to appoint someone to time the introductions and give a gentle signal when time's up.

### Including All Participants

Arranging participants in a circle for this activity increases participants' ability to hear and see one another.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: EXTENDED DISCUSSION OF COVENANT (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- See Activity 7

### Preparation for Activity

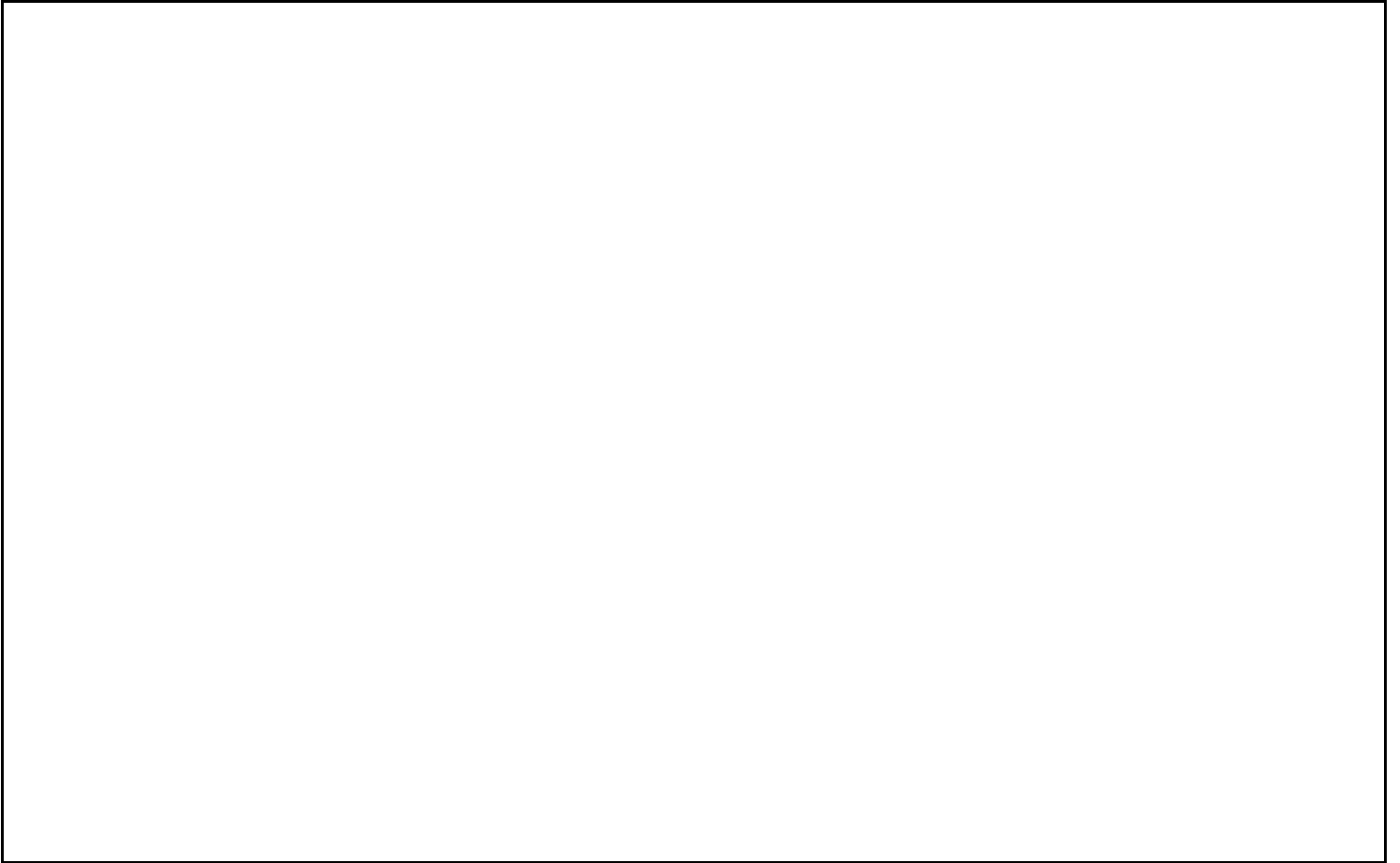
- See Activity 7

### Description of Activity

This activity allows additional time for Activity 7's discussion of the couple covenant. Combined with Activity 7, the total time for the Couple Covenant activity would be one hour.

Adapt Activity 7 by allowing ten minutes to complete each section of the worksheet and additional time for group discussion at the end.

## HANDOUT 1: GETTING ACQUAINTED





## HANDOUT 2: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian  
Universalist Association, 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 which 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 the 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 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.

## HANDOUT 3: WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS AND SCHEDULE

Our relationships can be reflections of our faith in the universe, in people, and in each other. As Unitarian Universalists, the seven Principles can be lights for us, guiding and illuminating our interactions. They can be values we affirm religiously and personally, as individuals and as couples.

Each workshop of the *Principled Commitment* program relates directly to the Principles by exploring fundamental qualities of healthy partnerships.

Workshop One: Covenant

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth*

This workshop establishes a foundation for the *Principled Commitment* program, promoting covenants between couples and among participants. Safety, trust, and good intention create space for mutual acceptance and encouragement to personal and spiritual growth.

Workshop Two: Humility

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations*

Too often, relationships are thwarted by power struggles, defensiveness, competition, and gender dynamics. A healthy humility in both partners serves as an antidote to these destructive ways of relating and points the way to mutuality, which is an expression of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Workshop Three: Trust

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations*

Trust is a fundamental cornerstone of healthy relationships, but it is not always freely given and received. It is built through countless interactions and experiences, within and beyond the relationship. Increasing mutual trust can help a relationship grow in equity, compassion, and justice. Conversely, relating with equity, compassion, and justice can help mutual trust flourish. In this way, trust is intertwined with the values celebrated by the second Principle.

Workshop Four: Dignity

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person*

Relating with dignity means that partners are respectful and worthy of respect. Mutual dignity creates a safe atmosphere in which choices and difficulties can be honestly discussed and resolved. In promoting both partners' ability to express themselves freely, openly, and lovingly, a couple affirms their inherent worth.

Workshop Five: Generosity

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*

Each person is an integral part of a much greater whole. Each couple is an integral part of a greater family, community, society, and nature. Generosity and gratitude demonstrate respect for this web, while nurturing the threads of interrelationship in our partnerships and beyond. Being grateful to and for each other, and for what life provides, enables a life of greater joy and integrity in this interdependent world.

Workshop Six: Connection

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*

Connection is that deep sense of knowing another person, which gives us the confidence to live in the world as part of a couple. The way we, as partners, communicate with one another — physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually — and the way we connect with others reflect how we value our interdependent web. Further, all of our actions and attitudes as partners are shaped by an interdependent web of family, friends, environment, community, and world.

#### Workshop Seven: Play

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning*

Who says a free and responsible search for truth and meaning can't be fun? A spirit of playfulness can open new possibilities in our understanding of life, as it opens us to deeper understanding of our partners. Play can create strong connections that sustain couples through difficulties. Play can help us accept our own, our partners', and the universe's foibles. Play can freely and responsibly transform a dull day into a day of laughter, joy, meaning, and truth.

#### Workshop Eight: Collaboration

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations*

Although we aspire to the ideal of right relationship, the reality is that as imperfect human beings we struggle with our own not-always-selfless natures. The ability to create just, equal, and compassionate relationships is one of the most important and difficult challenges we face. Conflict, jealousies, and external problems may seem to conspire to undermine our loving relationships. By engaging in respectful interaction, managing conflicts productively, and facing challenges collaboratively, we are better able to sustain mutually loving and beneficial relationships.

#### Workshop Nine: Commitment

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all*

Our loving relationships are intimately connected with what happens in the greater world. Relationships can teach us to value — or devalue — community, justice, liberty, and peace. When we enact love and justice in our relationships, we are better equipped to enact them in the wider world. The commitments couples make with one another can fuel commitments to live their values socially and politically. By taking charge of personal behaviors, by committing to principles, by learning to cope with difficulties and change in a constructive manner, by living a life of generosity and good intention through loving and compassionate relationships, we help ensure that a similarly positive world becomes a more realistic vision.

#### Workshop Ten: Love

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principles: All*

The transformative power of love underpins every Unitarian Universalist Principle. It is also the foundation for a healthy individual, a healthy couple, and a healthy community. Love can be seen as the source of meaning and as the expression of faith in human relationships. The Greeks identified three types of love: Eros, the passionate love between lovers; Philos, the love among close friends; and Agape, the love for the greater society or greater good. The manifestation of all three forms of love can help a healthy relationship grow. Remembering how to love, and acknowledging the need to give and to receive love, is the basis for all affirmative human relationships. Love can transform a hurting world.

#### Workshop Eleven: Celebration

Date:            Time:

*Unitarian Universalist Principles: All*

This final workshop is a culmination of all that has been explored and learned during the program. Couples will explore their faith, naming those things on which they "place their hearts." Individuals will be able to celebrate their part in a shared identity made up of two lives that have come together in a healthy and whole relationship. It is a well-deserved celebration of life and love among the community.

## HANDOUT 4: SUGGESTED GROUP COVENANT

Together, we covenant to explore and nurture healthy communication with our partners and others in our group. We will:

- Listen with an open mind and open heart
- Recognize each couple as being made up of two different people, each with his/her own perspective
- Respect the privacy of our fellow participants by keeping personal stories confidential
- Participate fully and freely
- Respect others and their opinions
- Reserve the right to pass
- Expect unfinished business
- Enjoy the challenge of learning something new together
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## HANDOUT 5: COUPLE COVENANT WORKSHEET

*Communicating with a partner begins with appropriate effort and intention. This worksheet is designed to aid in that communication.*

**Words from a covenant we have made in the past:**

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**Individual intentions:**

*Complete the following sentences individually, not as a couple. Write down your personal intentions rather than the expectations you might have of your partner.*

*As we spend time together over the next several weeks . . .*

*I want to show my partner \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I want to help my partner do/feel/be \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I want to bring a spirit of \_\_\_\_\_ to the way we relate.*

*I want to try \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I want to know \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I want to balance \_\_\_\_\_.*

*After sharing your intentions with one another, write about how you can help your partner in the coming weeks.*

*I can help my partner fulfill her/his intentions by... \_\_\_\_\_*

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**Ideas for a covenant we might affirm in the future:**

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# LEADER RESOURCE 1: PROMOTING THE PROGRAM

*The following sample promotional materials can help you attract workshop participants.*

## Sample Congregation Newsletter Announcement

Love is usually credited as the basis for a healthy relationship, but other qualities are needed as well: generosity, collaboration, and play, to name a few. These elements will be explored in *Principled Commitment*, a series of adult workshops for couples offered this fall through our Adult Religious Education program.

The 11-week series is free and open to married or partnered couples — of all gender combinations — seeking to enhance good relationships. It is not designed to fix broken relationships. The series will begin with an introductory workshop. Other workshops will explore the concepts of humility, trust, dignity, generosity, connection, play, collaboration, commitment, love, and celebration.

Workshops will be held at . Child care is available on request. Registration is limited to ten couples, and advance registration is required; please contact at or . We welcome participation by people of all physical abilities. Please let us know in advance if you have accessibility needs so we can accommodate you.

## Sample Order of Service Announcement

Committed couples seeking to enhance their relationship are welcome to register for a workshop series called *Principled Commitment*. Sponsored by this congregation, the free series will begin on and will run for . For details, contact co-leaders .

## Sample Press Release

The sample release may be adapted for use in any congregation. After formatting it to suit your own letterhead and details, you may fax, mail, or e-mail it to your local newspapers. Single-space text when e-mailing; double-space for hard copies and faxes. At the end of the release, center the # symbol or -30- to accommodate newspaper style.

## NEWS RELEASE

### CONTACT:

### LOCAL CONGREGATION OFFERS RELATIONSHIP ENRICHMENT WORKSHOPS

Love is usually credited as the basis for a healthy relationship, but other qualities are needed as well: generosity, collaboration, and play, to name a few. These elements will be explored through a series of adult workshops offered this fall by

- Provide visual information using newsprint or whiteboards. Have one person write on the newsprint or whiteboard and a second person (facing the group) voice what is being written.
- Provide printed handouts (in both regular and large print format), such as copies of any stories that you are telling, for participants who need them.

## Welcoming Requires Continual Attention

It is a credit to you that a person who is hard of hearing trusts you enough to come to your workshop. Many people who are hard of hearing avoid such situations because of the communication difficulties, embarrassment, frustration, and impatience that are often encountered.

Imagine this scenario: As you're leading the workshop, you and the participants are engrossed in easy back-and-forth communication about deep, personal topics. Conversation is intense; voices drop as people reveal private, never-before-spoken thoughts. Three people speak at once in a fluid, back-and-forth way, while two people at the end of the table have a conversation with each other about something personal.

Meanwhile, the person who is hard of hearing is trying to listen to you, separate the background voices from what you are saying, and feel confident enough to ask you to repeat something you have said to the whole group — all while having a

meaningful religious education experience. For a person who is hard of hearing, the impulse is often to avoid being a bother — to withdraw, give up, pretend to hear what is going on, and perhaps not come to the next session.

As a leader, it's up to you to control the workshop situation. Making sure that only one person is talking at a time, that participants speak up, and so on makes for an environment that is good for everyone's learning.

## LEADER RESOURCE 6: WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE LOW VISION

Many people who are called "blind" have some vision. Some people may be able to read large print and move about without use of a white cane or guide dog in many or all situations, may be able to perceive light and darkness, and perhaps see some colors. Some people may have better vision one day than another, or see better in certain lighting conditions.

People who have low vision or are blind employ different techniques to do things, according to their preferences, skills, and needs. For example, to access printed material, some people may use Braille; others may use large print, magnifiers and telescopes, closed-circuit TVs, computer-generated text-to-voice, or audio-publications on tape or CD.

Remember, each person is unique, whether or not they are blind or have vision problems. Therefore, it is impossible to make universal statements about what will enable us all, in our diversity, to be welcomed and be able to fully participate. The following suggestions can assist you in making your workshops more welcoming, but is with all reciprocal relationships, it is always important and appropriate to ask your individual participants what will help them feel most included.

### Reading and Writing

- Ensure participants' access to handouts by learning about their preferences. Do they need large print? What font and how large? Would they like audio versions? Would they like a digital version for their computer? See the guidelines at the end of this leader resource for instructions on creating accessible handouts.
- Offer large print and/or Braille editions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the hymnbook which is used in many of *Principled Commitment's* workshops. Such editions are available from [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#). An electronic version of the hymnbook (that the person can listen to or use on a laptop) can be sent as a Microsoft Word e-mail attachment simply by contacting [access@uua.org](mailto:access@uua.org) (at <mailto:access@uua.org>).
- When writing on newsprint, use bold dark-colored markers (black or dark blue) for high contrast and visual ease. Refrain from using red, green, yellow, or pink markers.

- If you are using PowerPoint slides, refrain from visually "busy" backgrounds. Use black or dark-blue text on a light-colored background and select an easy-to-read font such as Arial.

### Personal Suggestions

- Ask participant who are blind or have low vision where they would like to sit. Ask other people to move if the best position for that person is already taken.
- Do not take care of tasks for a person that s/he would normally do. First ask if s/he wants assistance, then offer to help, and be guided by the person's response to your offer.
- If you see someone about to encounter a dangerous situation, be calm and clear about your warning. For example, if s/he is about to bump into a pole, calmly and clearly call out, "Wait there for a moment; there is a pole in front of you."
- Never touch a blind person unexpectedly; never, ever, grab a person's arm or cane without permission.
- Do not hold a person's arm while walking. Let the person hold your arm. This will let him/her walk slightly behind you, and the motion of your body will tell him/her what to expect. Offer verbal cues as to what is ahead when you approach steps, curbs, escalators, or doors.
- Never distract, pet, or offer food to a guide dog without permission. The dog is working.

### Environmental Suggestions

- Eliminate tripping hazards, such as clutter or unexpected objects, in the classroom and in the hallways leading to it.
- Meet in a well-lit room with no glare or dark areas.

### Communication Suggestions

- When you are greeting a person who is blind or visually impaired, use his/her name and don't forget to identify yourself. For example, "Hi Sam, it's Joe."
- In discussions, ask participants to identify themselves by name before they speak, especially toward the beginning of the program when participants are just getting to know one another's faces and voices.



- When brainstorming or writing on newsprint, have one person write on the newsprint while a second person (facing the group) voices what is being written.
- Speak directly, not through an intermediary. Use a natural conversational volume and tone.
- It is really okay to use say things like "See you soon." Feel comfortable using everyday words relating to vision like "look", "see", "watching TV".
- During a conversation, give verbal feedback to let the speaker know you're listening. For example, instead of nodding your head, say "sure" or "uh-huh."
- When you leave, say you are leaving. If you are leaving a person who is blind or severely visually impaired in an open area, ask if s/he would like assistance to go to the side of a room, to a chair, or some landmark.

#### Hints to Help Create Larger/Clearer Print Documents

**Paper and ink.** Use matte non-glossy paper, either white or pastel color. Some people with low vision prefer yellow paper. Use black or dark blue ink.

**Font.** Use 14 or 16 point Arial. Do not underline and avoid using capital letters in blocks of text because they are harder to read. Do use them in headlines or in single words to emphasize them. Avoid using italics because they are harder to read. In general, use bold letters to emphasize words.

**Numbers.** Numbers 3, 5, 6 and 8 are hard to read. Where you can, spell out the number like "the meeting will begin at eight o'clock."

**Spacing.** Left justified text is clearer. Center text for titles and headings. Don't squeeze or stretch text. Don't right justify even if you are using two columns. Leave enough space between columns so that people don't read across the whole page.

**Design.** Keep it simple and uncluttered. Avoid wrapping text around a graphic when it produces an uneven left hand edge. Make the margins smaller to fit more text in. Avoid double-sided printing if it leaves a gray shadow on the paper's other side.

**Paragraphs.** Instead of indenting, leave a line space between paragraphs.

**Page numbers and symbols.** Page numbers, headers, and footers, should be the same font size as the rest of the text. If you are providing both large and smaller print versions, it may be helpful to indicate the print page (pp)

as well. Keep brackets, parentheses, colons, dashes, slashes, etc. to a minimum.

**Hasty larger print documents.** Changing font size on your computer is simple. Also, if you need to, large print copies can be made on your copy machine by enlarging 8.5 x 11-inch documents to 11 x 17-inch paper. But this is not ideal because the larger paper is difficult to handle and it focuses on a person's disability. It often does work though. Enlarge approximately 135-150 percent depending on your margins. Try a page to make sure you are not losing any text on the edges.

#### Hints for Creating Electronic Versions of Handouts

Many people who are blind or who have low vision rely on their computer's text-to-speech features to read printed documents. You can e-mail electronic versions of handouts to participants who request them, you can share a Microsoft Word version of the handout on compact disc, or you can give participants a link to the *Principled Commitment* web page that contains the handout.

Note that most participants will not have their computers with them during the workshop, so this option works only for handouts that are not completed or engaged during the workshop.

#### Hints for Creating Audio Versions of Handouts

Many people who are blind or visually impaired are accustomed to listening to recorded texts. Offering audio versions of handouts can reach the widest range of blind or visually impaired readers. Blind or visually impaired people are likely to have access to audio cassette, compact disc, or mp3 players. Ask your participants which format is best for them.

You can record audio versions of handouts as well as each week's Taking It Home for participants. Record in a clear, pleasant voice with a good microphone and little background noise.

If a handout is to be read during a workshop, rather than after, you can offer it for in-class listening (with headphones). Alternately, you or a participant may read the handout aloud.

For more information, see adapted from [A Guide to Making Documents Accessible to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired](#) from the National Federation of the Blind.

## LEADER RESOURCE 7: WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE MOBILITY CONCERNS

In the US, 1.4 million people use scooters or wheelchairs. Millions more people use crutches, walkers, braces, or canes to help them get around. People may use different mobility aids at different times. Someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter may or may not also be able to walk. Someone who uses a cane or walker one day may use a wheelchair on another day.

The following suggestions refer primarily to the room in which your workshop will be presented. Your congregation's environment beyond that room makes a significant difference to participants who use mobility aids. The presence or absence of accessible restrooms, ramps, elevators, curb cuts, accessible public transportation, and accessible parking will affect members' ability to participate in your workshops.

### Physical/Personal Suggestions

- If your meeting room's door doesn't stay open on its own, hold the door open for someone using a mobility device to pass through.
- Always ask a person who uses a mobility device what he/she would prefer for seating, writing, seat position, and anything else that might be of concern. Asking is better than assuming.
- Keep mobility devices within reach of their users: do not reposition a walker, crutches, or cane without explicit permission, even if it seems to be "in the way."
- Only push, lean on, or touch a person's wheelchair if asked or given explicit permission. A wheelchair is part of a person's personal space.
- Make sure that participants know the location of your site's accessible restroom(s).
- When participants divide into small groups, pay attention to the process to ensure that people with mobility limitations can stay in their original places if they want to, or can move unobstructed to a new place.
- If you are creating a circle around the chalice for your opening or closing, expand or reconfigure the circle so you can easily include people with mobility limitations.

- Be attentive to the location of people with mobility devices. Sometimes, during breaks, or when workshop participants are moving around, people using mobility devices get "stuck" in a crowd. Create a welcoming environment by paying attention to the flow of movement in the room and intervening when anyone seems blocked.

### Environmental Suggestions

- Learn the location of accessible restrooms, water-fountains, elevators, ramps.
- If the accessible entrance to your building is not the main entrance, before each workshop make certain that the door is unlocked and snow, ice, debris and other obstructions are removed.
- Before each workshop, check that the paths to accessible restrooms, refreshments, and handouts are not obstructed by items such as trash cans, cleaning supplies, or coat racks.
- If you are arranging seating in a circle, make sure there is space for a wheelchair to enter and join the circle.
- Make sure that aisles are wide enough and that there is a variety of seating options — chairs with and without arms, room at tables for wheelchairs, etc.
- Have seating spaced so there is extra legroom for people using crutches, braces, walkers, or casts.

### Communications Suggestions

- Model inclusive language when giving instructions to stand: "Rise in body or spirit" is preferred; or use "Stand as you are willing and able."
- Ask "May I help?" when wanting to be helpful. And if given permission to help, then ask "How may I help" or "What would you like me to do?" Unsolicited assistance can be experienced as rude or intrusive.
- People who use wheelchairs are appropriately referred to as "wheelchair users," never as "wheelchair bound" or "confined to a wheelchair".
- Relax and smile! Everybody responds to a smile and a warm "hello".

## LEADER RESOURCE 8: PARTICIPANT CONTACT INFORMATION

**Names**

**Mailing Address**

**Phone**

**E-mail**

**Names**

**Mailing Address**

**Phone**

**Email**

**Names**

**Mailing Address**

**Phone**

**E-mail**

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**Names**

**Mailing Address**

**Phone**

**E-mail**

## LEADER RESOURCE 9: REFRESHMENT SIGN-UP SHEET

Date Workshop Names

\_\_\_\_\_ Covenant \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Humility \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Trust \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Dignity \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Generosity \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Connection \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Play \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Collaboration \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Commitment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Love \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Celebration \_\_\_\_\_

## FIND OUT MORE

Herz, Walter P., ed. *Redeeming Time: Endowing Your Church with the Power of Covenant*. Skinner House, 1999.

Kellerman, Lois, and Nelly Bly. *Marriage from the Heart: Eight Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together*. Penguin Compass, 2002.

Rendle, Gilbert. [Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: Handbook for Honoring Differences](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=447) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=447](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=447)). Alban Institute, 1998.

Wesley, Alice Blair. [Our Covenant: The 2000-01 Minns Lectures](#). Meadville Lombard, 2002.

## WORKSHOP 2: HUMILITY

### INTRODUCTION

*Religion is to do right. It is to love, it is to serve, it is to think, it is to be humble.*  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson, nineteenth-century author and speaker, trained as a Unitarian minister

Humility is a virtue that for too long has had a bad rap in our Unitarian Universalist religious movement and society at large. Humility can get associated with weakness, servitude, and acting like an all-around doormat. Such associations, however, do not pertain to the true, healthy kind of humility that we do well to cultivate in our religious and relational lives. Humility is absolutely compatible with worth and dignity. It means recognizing our own finitude — the limits of our individual and collective understandings. As the Reverend Barbara Wells ten Hove reminds us, to be humble is to be open and teachable, and to recognize that we don't know everything and still have more to learn. This virtue is truly a gift in our relationships, as it is a gift in our religious lives.

In this workshop, participants will discuss what makes humility difficult and will identify ways to strengthen the foundations of their connections by relating to each other with renewed humility.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle

Second Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

Too often, relationships are thwarted by power struggles, defensiveness, competition, and gender dynamics. A healthy humility in both partners serves as an antidote to these destructive ways of relating and points the way to mutuality, which is an expression of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Considerations for Adaptation

The workshop's alternate activities provide a variety of options for exploring the workshop's topics. Based on the interests and needs of your group, as well as your time constraints, you may wish to add them to your workshop or substitute them for some of the core activities. If you decide to use Alternate Activity 2, How We Met, plan to present it early in the workshop. If you use Alternate Activity 1, Faith in Action — UU "Horsemen," be sure to lead Activity 4, Communication

Pitfalls, beforehand. Note that Alternate Activity 3, Small Group Discussions on Humility, covers some of the same territory as Activity 3, What Don't We Know?; and conducting both activities may feel repetitive.

You may want to plan a five-minute break during the workshop.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Introduce the concept of a healthy UU humility and explore its application in relationships
- Engage participants in discussing four types of destructive communication and identifying alternatives
- Provide opportunities for couples to apply the workshop's concepts to their relationships

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Define humility and discuss its role in healthy relationships
- Identify common communication pitfalls and strategies to address them
- Name spiritual practices that can put them in touch with humility

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: A Healthy UU Humility	15
Activity 3: What Don't We Know?	20
Activity 4: Communication Pitfalls	45
Activity 5: Spiritual Practices That Promote Humility	15
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — UU "Horsemen"	30

Alternate Activity 2: How We Met	30
Alternate Activity 3: Small Group Discussions on Humility	30
Alternate Activity 4: Affirming the Second Principle	20

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Consider the guiding Principle for this session, "Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." Take a moment to reflect on how being open and teachable encourages healthy human relations. How does this connect to your sense of spirituality?

Read through Leader Resource 3, Gottman and the Four Horsemen, and consider the destructive behaviors it describes. Recall an instance from your own experience when one or more of these behaviors were displayed. How did it feel? How might the situation have been transformed to a constructive interaction? How might your own humility help keep the "four horsemen" at bay? What kind of spiritual affirmation or mantra can be of help to you in promoting healthy communication in times of conflict?



## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- Copies of the completed contact information sheet from Workshop 1 (see Preparation)
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy the completed Participant Contact Information sheet from Workshop 1, blocking out any information that individuals have asked you not to share with the group. Make at least one copy per leader and couple.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet, pen or pencil, and copies of the contact information sheet at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, take a copy of the contact information sheet, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table

- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Humility](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Select a reading that relates to the second Principle. In *Singing the Living Tradition*, readings 496 and 505 are suitable. If a responsive reading is chosen, provide additional hymnbooks as needed.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Humility, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns checking in by saying their name and, if they wish, briefly sharing insights from the first workshop. Ask whether couples have noticed any changes in how they relate to each other.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit their check-in to their name and a one-sentence comment.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to participants' volume, and ask those who speak softly to speak louder.

## ACTIVITY 2: A HEALTHY UU HUMILITY (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2: [Thoughts on UU Humility](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint with prepared list (see Preparation)
- Marker
- Easel
- Optional: Low-stick masking tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Study Leader Resource 2, Thoughts on UU Humility. Be prepared to incorporate these thoughts into the activity's discussion.
- Write the following list on newsprint, leaving room for additional ideas to be added.  
A healthy Unitarian Universalist humility . . .
  - Keeps us teachable
  - Lets us be filled with wonder and awe
  - Acknowledges our human connections to the earth and each other
  - Recognizes our limits
  - Knows that we, too, one day will die

### Description of Activity

Invite discussion by asking participants:

- When you hear the word "humility," what ideas and images come up for you?
- Where do these images come from? Are they connected to your religious upbringing? Are they connected to your current religious identity?

Offer your own ideas, informed by Leader Resource 2, Thoughts on UU Humility.

Display the newsprint sheet you have prepared and allow participants time to read it. Ask participants:

- What do you think of this notion of healthy UU humility?
- What other ideas, attitudes, and words would you associate with a healthy UU humility?

Record participants' responses on newsprint. When several ideas have been generated, ask participants:

- What behaviors in a relationship would demonstrate this kind of UU humility?

If desired, post the newsprint sheet on the wall so that participants can refer to it during other activities.

## ACTIVITY 3: WHAT DON'T WE KNOW? (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Easel, newsprint, and marker

### Description of Activity

Share these or similar words to focus the activity:

What allows us to be humble in spirit within our relationships? Each of you found the courage to get close to your partner after your first meeting, and you found the additional courage to commit to a long-term relationship. You may feel humbled when you think of all the reasons you might never have crossed paths. You were individuals, and yet you came together as a couple, an entity that is bigger than the sum of its parts. It's quite a matter of serendipity, isn't it? Many factors had to come together with a positive result.

Similarly, relating to your partner from a humble position requires many factors to be in place: the ability to give and accept feedback, to lose the posture of defensiveness, to focus on your partner, and to stay in the moment. Because of your love for each other, you can accept each other as human, fallible, struggling . . . and inherently good.

Invite participant discussion on the following questions. If desired, take notes on newsprint. If your group is larger than four or five couples, you may wish to split into two groups for discussion.

- If humility involves acknowledging that we don't know it all, it is helpful to remember what we *don't* know about our partners and about ourselves. When have you been reminded of things you don't know about your partner? When has your relationship (or partner) showed you things you don't know about yourself?
- In order to help our relationships fulfill their positive potential, what must we recognize about our own personal limits — of knowledge, of power, of ability?
- What are some behaviors that get in the way of relating with humility?
- How can we let our partners know when we find their behavior counterproductive?
- What are some healthy and humble ways to give and receive difficult feedback?

- How does the second Principle — affirming justice, equity, and compassion in human relations — speak to relating to one another with humility?

## ACTIVITY 4: COMMUNICATION PITFALLS (45 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3: [Gottman and the Four Horsemen](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint sheet with prepared list (see Preparation)
- Easel

### Preparation for Activity

- Study Leader Resource 3, Gottman and the Four Horsemen, so that you can present the material to participants in your own words.
- Create a newsprint sheet listing the names of Gottman's "four horsemen": Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling.

### Description of Activity

Present the material from Leader Resource 3, Gottman and the Four Horsemen. During your presentation, display the newsprint you have prepared with the "four horsemen" listed.

Invite participants to discuss these concepts:

- Have you seen these behaviors at play in relationships you are familiar with? If so, what was their effect?
- What makes these behaviors hard to respond to?
- How can these behaviors be related to partner abuse, both emotional and physical?
- How might a healthy Unitarian Universalist humility serve as an antidote to these behaviors?
- What healthy practices have helped you deal with conflict in your own relationships?

## ACTIVITY 5: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE HUMILITY (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Easel, newsprint, and marker

### Description of Activity

Share with participants:

According to Unitarian Universalist minister Scott Alexander, a spiritual practice is "any activity or attitude in which you can regularly and intentionally engage, and which significantly deepens the quality of your relationship with the miracle of life, both within and beyond you."

Ask participants to think quietly about spiritual practices that can help them connect with humility by recognizing their limits, experiencing wonder and awe, and creating connection with life and spirit. These can be disciplines, such as meditation; attitudes, such as openness; or actions, such as bringing food to a soup kitchen.

After a minute or two of reflection, invite participants to share some of the ideas they have for spiritual practices. You may want to write these ideas on newsprint.

After ideas have been shared, invite discussion:

- In what ways can this Unitarian Universalist community support you in these spiritual practices?
- In what ways can you share today's message with your religious community?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas or skills discussed in this workshop. As the leader, you may not be able to answer every question, so encourage participants to continue exploring these ideas as individuals and couples.

Distribute the Taking it Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about his/her experience of the workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, offer these closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- Was it a challenge to talk about conflict between couples? What else was challenging about this workshop? What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

Affection Connection — Humility

Extend your exploration of humility by trying one or more of these activities on your own.

For Individuals: Reflecting on Expectations

Take some time to write individually, exploring the following questions:

- When did I know I wanted a long-term commitment with my partner, and how did I know this?
- What were my expectations of coupled life when I entered into the relationship?

- Did my family, the media, or religious tradition shape my expectations?
- How have my expectations changed after five years, ten years, and so on?

For Couples: Sharing Reflections

After each of you has completed the written reflection described above, share some of your thoughts with one another.

For Couples with Children: Talking about Humility

Talk with your children about humility and being humble. Have they heard of the words before? Can they give examples? Do they think it is all right to sometimes say "I don't know," "I was wrong," or "I'm sorry"?

For Couples with Children: How We Met

If you have not already done so, consider sharing your "How we met" story with your children. Allow them to ask questions.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — UU "HORSEMEN" (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint with "four horsemen" (see Preparation)
- Low-stick masking tape

### Preparation for Activity

- If you haven't already done so for Activity 4, Communication Pitfalls, write the names of the "four horsemen" on newsprint: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, Stonewalling.

### Description of Activity

This activity is a follow-up to Activity 4, Communication Pitfalls.

Post the newsprint with the "four horsemen" listed. Explain that the "four horsemen" behaviors can arise not only in a couple's relationship with one another, but also in conversations with others about religion. Invite participants to think about how they've seen criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling play out in interactions between Unitarian Universalists and people of other religious faiths. (In these examples, the behaviors can be directed toward UUs or exhibited by them.) Encourage participants to think of specific

examples from their own lives and their own congregation. Here is an example:

A UU gets into an argument with his evangelical Christian sister about same-sex marriage. The UU says he supports same-sex marriage. His sister says, "You never could tell the difference between right and wrong, ever since you were a kid! Now you've found a religion that's just like you — morally confused." (criticism) The UU says, "Well, it's better than worshipping some outdated, oppressive, bogus book like you do!" (defensiveness)

Ask participants to share other examples of the "four horsemen" in religious conversations.

After identifying a few examples, ask:

- How might a UU respond to such statements with humility? How might we respond in keeping with our second Principle, "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations"?
- What are some ways for the speakers to express the same sentiments without using one of the negative behaviors?
- How can we present our religion to others in ways that are in keeping with our Principles and values?
- Is this an issue we'd like to explore further and perhaps share with other groups in the congregation? If so, make a plan to do so.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: HOW WE MET (30 MINUTES)**

### **Description of Activity**

This activity is offered for groups that need more time to get to know each other. If offered, it should be presented early in the workshop.

"How we met" stories can be a good way for workshop participants to get to know each other better as couples. Even people who have known each other for years may learn something new about their acquaintances with this ice-breaking activity.

Introduce this activity by saying something like:

A couple's life together is a story in progress, and this workshop will begin with the sharing of each couple's first story — the story of how you met.

Ask each couple to pair up with another couple and prepare to introduce each other to the group. Each will ask the other, "Out of all the millions of people in this world, how did you two meet? And what were your first impressions of each other?"

After each couple takes a turn sharing their story, bring the entire group together for introductions. Each pair can begin by saying, "I'd like to introduce (insert names), who met when..."

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON HUMILITY (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint (at least one sheet per group)
- Markers (at least one per group)
- Low-stick masking tape
- Questions listed on newsprint or digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write the following questions on newsprint, or create a digital slide to display them. Place the newsprint or screen so that all groups can see it.
  - How do you (or how might you), through your words and actions, practice healthy humility in your relationship with your partner?
  - How does humility fit with your spiritual beliefs about humans, the world, and the sacred? In what ways can humility be a spiritual practice?
  - How can (or how does) humility enhance your relationship?

### **Description of Activity**

This activity works well directly after Activity 2, A Healthy UU Humility. Use as an alternative to Activity 3, What Don't We Know?

Invite participants to form groups of three to four individuals. Encourage couples to separate and go to different groups. Ask each group to appoint a note-taker, who will record the group's comments on newsprint, and a summarizer, who will report back to the large group. Give each note-taker a sheet of newsprint and a marker.

Within the groups, pose these questions for discussion. Each group considers the same questions.

- How do you (or how might you), through your words and actions, practice healthy humility in your relationship with your partner?

- How does humility fit with your spiritual beliefs about humans, the world, and the sacred? In what ways can humility be a spiritual practice?
- How can (or how does) humility enhance your relationship?

After fifteen to twenty minutes, draw the small groups back to the large group for discussion.

Ask the note-takers to post their newsprint notes on the wall. Ask the summarizer from each group to briefly summarize some of the ideas and comments shared.

Before closing the activity, ask participants whether they wish to share any final comments on a healthy UU humility.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: AFFIRMING THE SECOND PRINCIPLE (20 MINUTES)**

### **Description of Activity**

Invite couples to identify, in couples, some practices that affirm justice, equity, and compassion in their

relationship. These can be current practices or practices desired for the future.

After five or ten minutes of discussion, invite the large group to re-gather. Ask:

- What helps us affirm justice, equity, and compassion in our relationships and our families?
- What can make it hard to affirm justice, equity, and compassion in our relationships and our families?
- What helps or reminders do you give yourself to act compassionately when you get tired, frustrated, angry, or are otherwise "at the end of your rope"?

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — HUMILITY

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 2, Humility.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Reading

Guided Meditation

Poem

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of humility as the basis for honest and authentic interaction. Participants will explore how humility may be an important part of what works in their relationships and how they can enrich their connection to their partner by exploring this concept.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading these words or other words of your choosing:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Too often, relationships are thwarted by power struggles, defensiveness, competition, and gender dynamics. A healthy humility in both partners serves as an antidote to these destructive ways of relating and points the way to mutuality, which is an expression of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

You may wish to offer a few moments of silence before proceeding to the reading.

Reading

Share the reading you have selected that relates to the second Principle. (Readings 496 and 505 in *Singing the Living Tradition* are suitable.)

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves". . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place with a spirit of humility. Envision yourself relating in an open and teachable way with your partner. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit as I read the poem.

Poem

Read "Councils" by Marge Piercy, 585 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.



## LEADER RESOURCE 2: THOUGHTS ON UU HUMILITY

*You may wish to incorporate these thoughts into Activity 2, A Healthy UU Humility.*

The Reverend Forrest Church notes that the words *human, humane, humanitarian, humor, humility, humble,* and *humus* (the organic portion of soil) are all related. These words connect humility to our very humanity and the earth on which we dwell. He writes, "From dust to dust, we live and move and have our human being. Our kinship is a mortal kinship. The mortar of mortality binds us fast to one another."

The Reverend Barbara Wells ten Hove learned about humility from her father:

To be humble, he told me, was to remain teachable. Whenever we think we know it all, real humility reminds us to stay open and willing to learn.

. . . The magic words, "I don't know," are at the essence of both awe and humility. They are also at the heart of our faith. "How?" you might ask. When we approach the universe with awe, while our first response can and will likely be "Wow!" perhaps our second response should be "I don't know!"

## LEADER RESOURCE 3: GOTTMAN AND THE FOUR HORSEMEN

How do we apply the idea of humility to the ways we communicate as couples? Do we need to be meek and noncommittal? Do we always need to communicate in "I statements"?

John Gottman, Ph.D., has been researching male-female marriages for over thirty years and same-sex committed relationships for over twelve years. His research suggests that happy, healthy couples use a wide variety of communication styles when they are in conflict. Some happy couples fight with each other frequently, some happy couples do everything they can to avoid a fight, and other happy couples talk things through without ever showing signs of anger. Couples need to agree on a style of conflict management and use it well when conflicts arise. "I statements" can work well, as can other styles — as long as the couple finds a style that works for both partners. Challenges arise when one partner consistently wants to "get it all out on the table" and the other consistently wants to "sweep it all under the rug."

Gottman's research has concluded that it's not the presence of certain techniques of dialogue, but rather the absence of certain destructive behaviors, that helps relationships survive for the long term. These four destructive behaviors are defensiveness, stonewalling, criticism, and contempt. Gottman calls these the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" because they can herald the end, or the decline, of a relationship.

### Criticism

Criticism is defined by Gottman as a global comment about your partner's personality or character. It is different from a complaint. A complaint might be, "You told me you understood the directions to Bill's house — I'm disappointed that we're lost." An example of a criticism in the same situation might be, "How could you have missed the name of the exit? You are such a poor listener!"

### Contempt

Contempt includes name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery, and hostile humor, as well as cynicism and sarcasm directed at one's partner. Messages of contempt are spoken from a position of superiority, which indicates a hierarchical relationship dynamic that is especially problematic.

### Defensiveness

Gottman defines defensiveness as "saying, in effect, 'The problem isn't me, it's you.'" Defensiveness often escalates conflicts, as partners bring up past hurts and grievances as a way of defending themselves against perceived criticism.

### Stonewalling

Stonewalling is a way of disengaging from a conflict. A partner who is stonewalling cuts off the kind of verbal and nonverbal communication that would express his/her emotions. She/he becomes unresponsive and uncommunicative.

## FIND OUT MORE

Gottman, John M., and Nan Silver. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the*

*Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*. Three Rivers Press, 1999.

## WORKSHOP 3: TRUST

### INTRODUCTION

*Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against a wide sky!*

— Rainer Maria Rilke, from *Letters to a Young Poet*

Quote source: *Sacred Threshold*, by Nelson & Witt.

Trust gives both partners in a relationship a sense of comfort, security, and ease. It affects every aspect of a relationship, from lovemaking to conflict resolution. Trust between partners can foster deep commitment and enhance feelings of connection and love.

Our ability to build trusting relationships is deeply tied to our personalities as well as factors from our past and present family relationships. This workshop engages couples in building skills for emotional intimacy and communication that can serve to enhance trust. Open discussion of trust and fear provides an opportunity for partners to be present to one another and affirm one another. It has the potential to deepen and strengthen couples' relationships.

It is always valuable to have the names of therapists and couples counselors on hand for referrals, and it is particularly important in this workshop, as participants begin to explore more vulnerable aspects of their personalities and relationships.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle

Second Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

Trust is a fundamental cornerstone of healthy relationships, but it is not always freely given and received. It is built through countless interactions and experiences, within and beyond the relationship. Increasing mutual trust can help a relationship grow in equity, compassion, and justice. Conversely, relating with equity, compassion, and justice can help mutual trust flourish. In this way, trust is intertwined with the values celebrated by the second Principle.

Considerations for Adaptation

Activity 4, Communicating Honestly and Openly, is interchangeable with Alternate Activity 2, Trust and Fear. Each is 45 minutes in length and involves individual reflection paired with discussion between partners. Both explore challenging issues in relationships that can make participants feel vulnerable. "Communicating Honestly and Openly" has greater potential for bringing up current conflicts, and "Trust and Fear" has greater potential for bringing up participants' past hurts.

This workshop's optional Faith in Action activity (Alternate Activity 1) engages participants in community service with a domestic violence shelter or other local agency. Such a project can be launched at this workshop or in connection with other workshops. The project could also be a culmination of the entire *Principled Commitment* program.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Help participants explore the role of trust in healthy relationships
- Offer tools to enhance couples' mutual trust, communication, and partnership

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Articulate the crucial role of trust in a relationship
- Identify ways to earn and maintain trust
- Practice communication skills that can help deepen trust

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: What Is Trust?	30
Activity 3: Introduction to Deep Listening	15
Activity 4: Communicating Honestly and Openly	45

Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Service Project Planning	30
Alternate Activity 2: Trust and Fear	45

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Take some time for reflection or journaling on your own. Consider the guiding Principle for this session, "Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." Reflect on the connections between trust, justice, equity, and compassion in love relationships. Are there aspects of your spiritual understanding or your religious practices that help you trust people, or trust the universe? If there are, engage with those practices and understandings. If there aren't, think about practices and understandings that can help enhance your sense of trust.

You may also wish to spend some time considering your own responses to the questions on Handout 2, *Why Do I Trust?*

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Trust](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Trust, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns checking in by saying their name and, if they wish, briefly sharing insights from the previous workshop on humility. Ask whether couples noticed anything new about the way they relate to each other.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit their check-in to their name and a one-sentence comment.

## ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS TRUST? (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint with prepared questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the following four questions on newsprint, leaving room below the last question to write responses:
  - What is trust?
  - Why is trust important in a relationship?

- How can justice, equity, and compassion enhance trust in a relationship?
- What actions help couples earn and maintain each other's trust?

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to form small groups of two or three couples. Display the newsprint you have prepared. Invite participants to discuss the four questions in their small groups.

After about twenty minutes, regather the large group. Solicit responses to the final question — ideas about how partners can earn and maintain each other's trust. List participants' responses on the newsprint sheet. You may want to suggest the following ideas:

- We respond in a caring way to each other's needs
- We communicate genuinely
- We have faith in each other to do the best we can
- We can count on each other; we are reliable

After the group has spent a few minutes generating the list, ask whether anyone would like to propose essential skills for creating and maintaining trust.

You may wish to conclude the activity by proposing the following essential skills:

- Communicating openly
- Being honest
- Following through on commitments

## ACTIVITY 3: INTRODUCTION TO DEEP LISTENING (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Nine Guidelines for Listening to Others](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)

### Description of Activity

Offer these or similar words to introduce the activity:

Listening is a foundational element of good communication. Without someone to listen, communication would be incomplete.

Deep listening adds another dimension to listening. It helps people listen to what is deep inside, needing to be expressed, yet often ignored or passed over. When we are truly heard, a deep connection begins to grow, strengthening our relationship.

In her book *The Sacred Art of Listening*, Kay Lindahl, founder of the Listening Center, describes the practice of deep listening as a sacred art. She lists three elements that are essential to deep listening: silence, reflection, and presence.

Silence slows us down and gives us a chance to reflect. It helps us be present to others. In everyday communication, we so often rush to fill silences with words. In deep listening, we allow and even invite silence.

Reflection involves taking in what we have heard. Sometimes our first reactions are not representative of our true inner wisdom. Pausing before responding enables us as listeners to integrate content and respond from our better selves.

Presence is the connection and attention we bring to those with whom we communicate. When we offer our full presence, free from distraction, we are better able to truly listen and enable our partners to feel truly heard.

Distribute Handout 1, *Nine Guidelines for Listening to Others*, and review the guidelines with the group. Invite participant questions and comments. Ask:

- Which of these guidelines do you find most practical for everyday communication?
- Which guidelines are most important for times of intense emotional connection between couples?

## ACTIVITY 4: COMMUNICATING HONESTLY AND OPENLY (45 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint with prepared questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing
- Writing paper (at least one sheet per participant)
- Pens or pencils
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell or chime

## Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.
- List the following five questions on a sheet of newsprint:
  - What was the situation?
  - How did the quality of the communication make you feel?
  - How do you think your partner felt?
  - How could you have communicated more openly?
  - How might this interaction have affected the level of trust within your relationship?

## Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

In an intimate partnership, the creation of "we," or a sense of mutuality, is extremely important. One of the best ways to achieve that state is by communicating openly.

Communicating openly includes stating your thoughts and feelings genuinely and respectfully. It means sharing and listening in ways that balance honesty with respect for your partner's feelings. Open communication is not just about the openness of the speaker — it's also about the openness of the listener. When a listener's feelings are hurt, that openness can become closed.

Effective communicators are good at observing, listening, and interpreting nonverbal information. They also understand how and when to offer a clear response or opinion, and both partners know when it is appropriate to express their own feelings.

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Invite participants to think of a recent situation in which they could have communicated more openly with their partners.

Post the newsprint on which you listed the five questions. Invite participants to spend 15 to 25 minutes reflecting and/or writing on the questions.

After five minutes of solo reflection, ring the bell or chime. Explain the next part of the activity with these or similar words:

I invite you to find your partner. You'll now have fifteen minutes to share your reflections with one another.

You will take turns being the speaker and the listener for five minutes each. When you're the speaker, focus on naming your own behaviors rather than your partner's

behaviors. When you're the listener, just listen to your partner — there is no need to respond with words. Strive for deep listening.

After each of you has spoken and listened, you will have five minutes to respond to each other. Use this time to clarify situations and start to identify ways of dealing with similar situations in the future.

Invite partners to begin sharing with one another. Ring the bell or chime gently after five minutes to remind partners to switch roles if they haven't already done so. After another five minutes, signal the beginning of the discussion period.

When the final five minutes have passed, ring the bell or chime again. Affirm the conversations that have been going on, and encourage participants to continue processing them in the week to come.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas or skills discussed in this workshop. As the leader, you may not be able to answer every question, so encourage participants to share their perspectives and to continue to work independently to enhance the trust in their relationship.

Distribute the Taking it Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about trust or this workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.



## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions.

Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- How well did we, as leaders and individuals, demonstrate good listening skills?
- The issue of trust may be a volatile subject. How did the couples handle it?
- If tension or differences of opinion arose, how well did we handle it? What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- What one facilitation skill do we each want to improve upon in the next session?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts, arranging for refreshments, and acquiring supplies. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

### Affection Connection — Trust

Extend your exploration of trust by trying one or more of these activities on your own. These deep listening exercises are adapted with permission from *Practicing the Sacred Art of Listening* by Kay Lindahl (Skylight Paths Publishing, 2003).

### For Individuals: Three Breaths

This exercise is a quick way to center yourself and listen to your heart.

- Take a first breath: Inhale, and identify what is upsetting you, controlling you, occupying your mind, or causing your stress.
- Let go of these things as you exhale.
- Second breath: Inhale, and touch the still point at the center of your being. See whether you can get there with a breath.
- Exhale.
- Third breath: Inhale, and ask yourself, "What is next?" Tap into your inner wisdom.
- Exhale, and notice what comes to your mind.

You may find that this very simple intervention will alter the path you were on when you felt stressed and out of control. You may be able to approach the situation from a more centered place.

### For Couples: Deep Listening

Each day this week, spend a minimum of fifteen minutes practicing deep listening with your partner. You may wish to warm up with this exercise:

- One person thinks of a question and asks it of his/her partner.
- If you are the responder, reflect on the question for 30 seconds, looking for a response rather than an answer.
- Notice your immediate response. Go deeper. Trust your intuition.
- Open your eyes and say whatever comes to your mind in response to the question. Take as much time as you need to say what wants to be said. Your partner's role is to listen without making a response or engaging in silent dialogue.
- When you are finished, reflect again for 30 seconds. Close your eyes and ask yourself: "What is the next question that wants to be asked?" It will come to you. This is not a linear exercise, so the question may or may not relate to what you've just said. Listen to the question without thinking about your partner or your partner's response.
- Open your eyes and state the question that comes to you. Your partner repeats the steps above.

### For Couple with Children: Deep Listening

Couples with children may want to practice the exercise above with a child, letting the child choose the subject.

Make sure the child gets to practice both speaking and listening.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — SERVICE PROJECT PLANNING (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Copies of [Domestic Violence Fact Sheet](http://www.ncadv.org/resources/FactSheets_221.html) (at [www.ncadv.org/resources/FactSheets\\_221.html](http://www.ncadv.org/resources/FactSheets_221.html)) for your state (see Preparation)
- List of options for projects from advance research (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Download and print a [Domestic Violence Fact Sheet](#) for your state. Make a copy for each participant.
- Conduct research to identify possible community service projects that can assist domestic violence shelters or antiviolence educational programs near you. For example, you might contact local agencies to ask whether they need services such as meal service or child care, items such as emergency toiletry kits or children's toys, or assistance with fund-raising. The [National Domestic Violence Hotline](http://www.ndvh.org/) (at [www.ndvh.org/](http://www.ndvh.org/)) (800-799-SAFE) can be a resource, as can the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence website](#) (at [www.ncadv.org/](http://www.ncadv.org/)).
- Select at least two service project options (if possible) that participants can consider together.

### Description of Activity

Explain that participants will have an opportunity to put *Principled Commitment* values into action by committing to serve others. Introduce the topic of domestic violence and ask how it is related to the workshop's values. Ask participants to think about what it would mean to them to help others escape violent situations and find trust and safety in relationships.

Describe to the group what you have learned about local programs' needs. Invite participants to brainstorm ideas for other ways to serve. As a group, select a project. On a newsprint sheet, create a task list with a timeline. Identify a point person (from the class) for each task.

Depending on your area, there may not be more than one option for a community service project. The group could also consider conducting an informational campaign within the congregation, such as placing a domestic violence educational display in all of the restrooms.

Please note that shelters often keep their locations secret to provide the safest environment for their clients. Let participants know this in case they are wishing to tour the facility. In some cases, there may be special programs (such as education or free play for children) in a separate location where outside participants are allowed.

If you decide on a direct care project, there may be a need for background checks, and some agencies may allow only women volunteers in their facility. Be sure to keep this in mind as you plan your project so that all workshop participants can be involved.

Plan to implement the project by the end of the *Principled Commitment* program or shortly after your final workshop.

### Including All Participants

It is valuable to remember that you may have participants in your workshop who have had direct experience with domestic violence in their current or past relationships. Do not assume it's something that happens only to "others."

Research the site of the service project to determine whether it will be accessible and inclusive for participants of all physical abilities.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: TRUST AND FEAR (45 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 2: [Why Do I Trust?](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell or chime

### Preparation for Activity

- This activity can feel word-heavy for the leader. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the points you'll be making so that you can articulate them in a way that feels natural to you.
- Find out whether there are alternative spaces at your site that couples can move to in order to have a more private discussion. Some couples will not want to be overheard or to overhear other couples discussing trust and fear.

## Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words about trust:

The level of trust between partners can influence their relationship, even though they may not be aware of it. It can affect their compatibility and ability to collaborate.

Trust levels may be affected by many things: past relationships, experiences with the current partner, issues from childhood, and observations of other couples' interactions.

Ask participants:

- Can you name some fears that get in the way of trust? One example is "fear of being vulnerable." What are some other examples?

If participants don't name them, you can add fear of being hurt, fear of losing control, fear of rejection, fear of change.

Explain using these or similar words:

Facing such fears can be part of a healthy, growing relationship between two people.

One of the most effective ways to dispel fears is to discuss them openly in a caring and respectful manner.

Sometimes one partner discounts the other's fears by saying something like "You couldn't possibly believe that" or "It's silly to feel that way." A more compassionate way to respond to a partner's expression of fear is to respect it — to trust it — as being real for that person.

The ability to express fear is an element of trust. The speaker is saying, "I trust you to understand how I really feel, and I expect that you will respect my feelings."

Distribute Handout 2, Why Do I Trust? Explain:

This activity will give you and your partner an opportunity to talk about trust and fear openly and respectfully. In the first part of the activity, you will reflect individually. I'll give you about five minutes to write whatever comes to mind in response to the prompts on the handout. Then you will come together with your partner for discussion.

Some trust and fear issues may get raised that are too difficult or painful to discuss in this setting. I encourage you to go only as deep as feels comfortable for you in this room at this time.

When you complete the worksheets, one section may contain more statements than the other. When partners get together to discuss, one partner may have more statements than the other. Accepting those differences

is part of learning to listen to and understand each other. The point of this exercise is to allow each person's feeling to be articulated and heard.

Allow five minutes for solo reflection. Then ring the bell or chime and ask participants to get together with their partners. Offer the following process for sharing:

Each partner will share one of their responses to the first statement on the handout. The role of the other partner is to listen without making any comments. You will have five minutes — two and a half minutes as speaker, and two and a half minutes as listener.

If you have alternative spaces that couples can move to for private discussion, let participants know.

At two and a half minutes, and after five minutes, ring the bell or chime. Repeat the process with the second statement on the handout.

After both partners have shared their responses to the second statement and discussed their responses together, ring the bell or chime again. Invite partners to spend two minutes discussing what it was like to hear from one another about trust.

If there is time remaining, regather the group and invite participants to share something they learned from this exercise. Ask:

- What are some things you and your partner do that continue to enhance the trust between you?
- What philosophical outlooks or spiritual understandings have helped you to create trust and dispel fear?

## HANDOUT 1: NINE GUIDELINES FOR LISTENING TO OTHERS

These guidelines are designed to facilitate healthy dialogue and deep listening in various situations and to create a safe space for meaningful conversation on all levels.

- *When you are listening, suspend assumptions.* What we assume is often invisible to us. We assume that others have had the same experiences that we have, and we listen to them with that in mind. Learn to recognize assumptions by noticing when you get upset or annoyed by something someone else is saying. You may be making an assumption. Let it be—suspend it—and resume listening so you can understand the other person.
- *When you are speaking, express your personal response.* You have a unique perspective, informed by your tradition, beliefs, and life practices. Speak from your heart, using "I" language to take ownership of what you say. Notice how often the phrases "we all," "of course," "everyone says," and "you know" come into your conversation. The only person you can truly speak for is yourself.
- *Listen without judgment.* The purpose of dialogue is to come to an understanding of another person, not to determine whether the person is good, bad, right, or wrong. If you are sitting there thinking, "That's good," "That's bad," "I like that," or "I don't like that," you are having a conversation in your own mind, not listening to the speaker. Simply notice when you do this, and return to being present with the speaker.
- *Suspend status.* Everyone is an equal partner in a mutual quest for insight and clarity. You are each an expert in your own life, and that's what you bring to the dialogue process.
- *Honor confidentiality.* If you tell others about stories or ideas from this workshop, leave the names of participants in the room so that no one's identity will be revealed. A couple's communication should also be kept confidential to engender trust in the relationship. Ask permission before sharing your partner's innermost thoughts. Create a safe space for self-expression.
- *Listen for understanding, not to agree with or believe.* You do not have to agree with or believe anything that is said. Your job is to listen for understanding.
- *Ask clarifying or open-ended questions.* Use them to further your understanding and to explore assumptions.
- *Honor silence and time for reflection.* Notice what wants to be said rather than what you want to say.
- *Ensure that one person speaks at a time.* Pay attention to the flow of the conversation. Notice what patterns emerge when you are in a group. Give each person an opportunity to speak, while knowing that no one is required to speak.

## HANDOUT 2: WHY DO I TRUST?

*Write whatever comes to mind in response to the two prompts below.*

I trust this relationship because . . .

I sometimes withhold trust, or fear going deeper, because . . .

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE—TRUST

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 3, Trust.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of trust. Participants will explore what trust is, what its function is within a relationship, and how trust can be deepened.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words or words of your choosing:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Trust is a fundamental cornerstone of healthy relationships, but it is not always freely given and received. It is built through countless interactions and experiences, within and beyond the relationship. Increasing mutual trust can help a relationship grow in equity, compassion, and justice. In turn, relating with equity, compassion, and justice can help mutual trust flourish. In this way, trust is intertwined with the values celebrated by the second Principle.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should

haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place where trust is possible. Envision yourself fully trusting your partner and being trusted. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

## FIND OUT MORE

Lindahl, Kay. *Practicing the Sacred Art of Listening: Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice*. Skylight Paths, 2002.

Lindahl, Kay. *The Sacred Art of Listening: A Guide to Enrich Your Relationships and Kindle Your Spiritual Life*. Skylight Paths, 2003.

# WORKSHOP 4: DIGNITY

## INTRODUCTION

*Love, the fruit of honoring, is reached through the continuing courage to leap into one another's arms. It feels risky to do this at times — in new relationships, for example, or when we feel ourselves changing. Committing to honoring takes stamina and vision. But without the love that honoring creates, the world itself cannot hang together.*  
— Lois Kellerman and Nelly Bly, *Marriage from the Heart*

Source: *Marriage from the Heart*, by Kellerman and Bly, p. 95.

As Unitarian Universalists, we participate in congregations that covenant to affirm and promote "the inherent worth and dignity of every person." What, then, does it mean to affirm and promote dignity, particularly in our romantic relationships? Dignity is defined as "the quality or state of being worthy, honored, or esteemed" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). How in our relationships do we show one another, and ourselves, that we are worthy? Do our words and actions honor our partners and honor ourselves? Do we show each other the conscientiousness and consideration we would show someone we hold in great esteem? This workshop explores the concept of dignity in relationships, considering the roles of loving actions, relationship rights, and longevity of commitment in upholding dignity.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
First Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Relating with dignity means that partners are respectful and worthy of respect. Mutual dignity creates a safe atmosphere in which choices and difficulties can be honestly discussed and resolved. In promoting both partners' ability to express themselves freely, openly, and lovingly, a couple affirms their inherent worth.

### Considerations for Adaptation

The Taking it Home activity "Seeing the Sacred in Each Other" can be transformed into an in-class craft project. If you are conducting this workshop as part of a retreat, the shift to a craft activity could be a welcome break from discussion. Be sure to plan accordingly to acquire the supplies involved.

Three of the alternate activities emphasize communication skills. You may choose to use these in place of (or in addition to) other activities if your group is seeking skill-building opportunities in the *Principled Commitment* program.

## GOALS

This workshop will:

- Apply the concept of dignity to relationships
- Help couples explore how they can uphold and enhance one another's dignity

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify ways to respect a partner's dignity
- Describe their own experiences of feeling honored and dignified by their partners
- Work with their partners to create lists of rights they seek to uphold in their relationships

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: Defining Dignity	10
Activity 3: Treat Me with Dignity	30
Activity 4: Rights in Relationship	30
Activity 5: Helping Your Relationship Age with Dignity	20
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Service Project Update	15
Alternate Activity 2: Skills for Communicating Dignity — Empathy	20
Alternate Activity 3: Skills for Communicating Dignity — Respect	10
Alternate Activity 4: Skills for Communicating	20



## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Before leading this workshop, set aside some time for personal reflection or journal writing. After centering yourself, consider the guiding Principle for this session, "The inherent worth and dignity of every person." How do you live this Principle in your daily life and relationships?

If you wish to reflect on this question further, consider: How do you make others feel they are worthy or honored? How do you know when someone respects your worth and dignity? What spiritual beliefs or practices help you celebrate your own and others' dignity?

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service – Dignity](#)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Find reading 468 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "We Need One Another." Determine whether you will read it solo or with the group. If you read it with the group, provide extra copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*. Hold it in readiness for the reading.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Dignity, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on trust. Ask whether they have found ways to use communication skills to build trust in their relationships.

If desired, you can move the check-in along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to one-sentence comments.

Once you feel participants know each other well enough, you may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

## ACTIVITY 2: DEFINING DIGNITY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Low-stick masking tape

## Description of Activity

Ask participants to recall the guided meditation from the opening — specifically, the invitation to envision being treated with dignity. Invite volunteers to call out one word that describes how that experience made them feel. Quickly list their responses on newsprint. No discussion is necessary.

After a variety of responses have been offered, post the list on the wall. Invite participants to consider what the word "dignity" means.

Offer the following points in your own words:

One definition of dignity is the quality or state of worth, respect, honor, or esteem. In terms of relationships, dignity may mean respecting the rights of your partner. It may mean valuing differences in behavior and style. It may mean ensuring that neither partner is humiliated within the context of the relationship.

Dignity may also mean respecting and valuing yourself. In a relationship based on mutual dignity, both partners are worthy, honored, respected, and esteemed.

Dignity is something we may not be conscious of until it is absent — when language or behavior violates dignity.

Relationships can be strengthened by consciously embracing and increasing dignity. When partners treat each other with dignity, they both gain a sense of security. They build the confidence, safety, and trust they need to flourish and grow individually and as a couple.

## ACTIVITY 3: TREAT ME WITH DIGNITY (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Newsprint sheet with prepared questions (see Preparation)
- Low-stick masking tape
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell or chime

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the following questions on a sheet of newsprint:
  - Were there any surprises in what you shared?

- What are the common characteristics of the types of behavior that make you feel your dignity is honored?
- What can you take from this discussion to enhance mutual dignity in your relationship?

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity by emphasizing the connection between a feeling of dignity in a relationship and our actions within a relationship. Then ask:

- In what ways do we show our partners that they have worth and dignity?

Invite participants to respond by sharing examples of behaviors that show respect for others. List responses on the blank newsprint. Keep the brainstorm brisk and under five minutes in duration. Examples might include:

- Taking someone's words and feelings seriously
- Holding the door for someone
- Kissing a partner hello or goodbye
- Keeping one's word
- Saying please and thank you
- Not answering a cell phone call during a conversation
- Remembering special occasions

Invite participants to pair up with their partners. Explain the next part of the activity with these or similar words:

Now you will take turns as speakers and listeners. The listener's role is to listen without comment. The speaker will have five minutes to respond to this question: Thinking about your relationship, when have you felt especially honored and respected by your partner? Share specific incidents, attitudes, or habits that you see as contributing to a feeling of dignity in the relationship.

After five minutes, ring the bell or chime and ask the partners to switch roles. While they continue sharing, post the sheet of questions that you prepared before the workshop.

After another five minutes, ring the bell or chime again. Invite partners to spend five minutes in a two-way discussion on the questions that you posted:

- Were there any surprises in what you shared?
- What are the common characteristics of the types of behavior that make you feel your dignity is honored?

- What can you take from this discussion to enhance mutual dignity in your relationship?

After five minutes, reassemble the large group. Ask:

- Who was surprised by the examples that your partner shared with you?
- Did your discussions focus on the little things — everyday actions and attitudes — or on special events, like vacations or birthday parties? (Point out that both are ways of showing respect and honor.)
- How can we enhance a sense of mutual dignity in our relationships?

## ACTIVITY 4: RIGHTS IN RELATIONSHIP (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Writing paper (at least one sheet per couple)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing
- Optional: Copies of the United Nations [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html) (at [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)) (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.
- Optional: Print copies of the United Nations [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html) (at [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)) (up to one copy per couple). These can be used for participants' reference as they think of rights they'd like to uphold in their relationship.

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to pair up with their partners. Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Introduce the activity using these or similar words:

The concepts of human rights and human dignity go hand in hand. The United States Bill of Rights and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights are statements of how a government ought to respect its citizens and preserve their dignity. Movements that fight for civil and human rights often do so to protect the dignity of people who have been marginalized and oppressed.

What rights do you want to affirm in your relationship — rights that can help each of you uphold one another's worth and dignity? Some examples might be the right to

ask for help, the right to say no, the right to honest communication, the right to build friendships . . . the list goes on.

I invite you to work with your partner to generate a list of rights for your relationship. These can be rights you already affirm, consciously or unconsciously. They can also be rights you'd like to establish for the future. Your list of rights can be helpful down the road as you develop your couple covenants.

If you've printed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, show participants where they can find a copy for their reference.

After twenty minutes of work in couples, ask the group to re-gather. Discuss with participants:

- How was that exercise for you?
- Was it easy to think of rights?
- Would any couple like to share a "favorite" right they came up with?
- What from this activity can help you in treating one another with dignity?

Encourage couples to continue discussing rights in the coming weeks, especially if they found some controversies in their discussion. Talking about these controversies can be fruitful and helpful in developing a shared understanding of the relationship.

## ACTIVITY 5: HELPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP AGE WITH DIGNITY (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, easel, and markers

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

It's easy to see why we would want to be honored, respected, and treated with dignity. In the early phases of a relationship, partners may put a great deal of emphasis on doing so. But as relationships mature, is it natural for honor and esteem to be replaced by a pattern of taking each other for granted?

Invite participants to give examples of ways partners may come to take each other for granted. As a group, come up with some ideas for reversing those patterns of behavior and encouraging mutual honor and dignity. Record ideas on newsprint, if desired.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas or skills discussed in this workshop. As the leader, you may not be able to answer every question, so encourage participants to continue exploring these ideas as individuals and couples.

If you are thinking of conducting the ritual in Workshop 5 that includes fire, ask if any participants have a strong sensitivity to smoke.

Distribute the Taking it Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about dignity or this workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read these closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?

- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

### Affection Connection — Dignity

Extend your exploration of dignity by trying this activity on your own.

### Seeing the Sacred in Each Other

Centering deeply on that which you hold sacred in one another can be an important step in honoring both the individuals and the partnership. In this activity, you are invited to meditate on all that is holy in your partner, create a small representation to honor him/her, and share that representation in a loving and sacred way.

Each of you will need a small box and a variety of art materials, such as beautiful ribbons, small stones, glue, paint, or other items.

Sit quietly and think about your partner. Imagine your partner in unpolished moments, when she/he is genuinely his/her imperfect self. Think about all that is holy and sacred about your partner. Think of the whole and of small details, and hold those feelings, images, and memories lovingly. Think of how sacred and intimate an act it is to let oneself be seen and known by another.

Now take a small box and decorate it to honor your beloved partner. Use the art materials to represent the images, details, and ideas you generated during the meditation. You may wish to layer art materials, to use the inside of the box to house more private ideas, and to add to your creation as you think more deeply about your partner.

When your boxes are complete, share them with each other.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — SERVICE PROJECT UPDATE (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- The task list generated in Workshop 3's Faith in Action activity

### Preparation for Activity

- This activity is a follow-up to Workshop 3's Faith in Action, which engaged participants in discussing a service project for a local shelter or other agency that addresses issues of domestic violence.

### Description of Activity

Discuss what has been accomplished and what needs to be accomplished for your group to participate in its service project. Ask:

- How does this project connect with this workshop's theme of dignity and the first Principle, "the inherent worth and dignity of every person"?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SKILLS FOR COMMUNICATING DIGNITY — EMPATHY (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Empathy Role-Play](#)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review Leader Resource 2, Empathy Role-Play. Decide whether you will act out the role-play with your co-leader or recruit participant volunteers.

### Description of Activity

Define and describe empathy so that participants operate from a shared understanding:

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines empathy as an "understanding so intimate that the feelings, thoughts, and motives of one are readily comprehended by another."

To empathize with others can be figuratively described as "walking in their shoes" or "crawling into their skin." It means seeing what a situation looks like and feels like from the other person's perspective.

Ask participants:

- How do you show your partner empathy?

- How can you know when your partner is empathizing with you?
- What positive things can empathy do for a relationship?

As part of the discussion of the last question, you may wish to make the following points in your own words:

The ability to be empathetic builds more positive relationships. It can also defuse potentially negative situations. Partners with empathy deal more constructively with feelings of anger, fear, confusion, sadness, or hurt—their own or their partner's.

Introduce the skills-based portion of this activity with these or similar words:

When we listen empathetically, we listen for both content and feeling. The content is the message being communicated. The feeling is the emotion being experienced. For example, if your partner says "I'm fine," but she looks sad and her voice sounds sad, you might conclude that she's sad and treat her as such.

Invite participants to reflect on times when they have observed conflicting words and feelings. Ask participants:

- What are some ways to "listen" for both the content and the feeling parts of the message?

Share with participants:

A helpful way to listen to both parts of the message involves asking yourself, "Given what I have heard and seen, what is my partner telling me? Why is this significant?" Then ask yourself, "How does that seem to make my partner feel?"

Remember, each person's reactions and responses are unique, even in similar situations. By thinking through these questions first, your response may be more empathetic than if you had blurted out the first thing that came to mind.

Use Leader Resource 2, Empathy Role-Play, to present a demonstration of listening with empathy. Co-leaders can play the two roles, or you can select volunteers from the group.

After the presentation, ask participants:

- What did you notice?
- How does it feel when someone responds to you in this way?

If time allows, ask participants to pair up with their partner and take turns practicing empathetic responses to concerns each partner is facing with work, children, or extended family relationships.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SKILLS FOR COMMUNICATING DIGNITY — RESPECT (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

The educator Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot writes:

Respect is a circle. It is about symmetry. It's about reciprocity. Even if there are differences in knowledge and status and power and resources and skills, respect is a great equalizer. It is the ways in which we can be symmetric with one another, and it comes again through this sense of connection in relationships.

A central dimension of being respectful to another person is being genuinely curious about who the person is, what the person is about, and what the person's dreams and fears are. It's a matter of wanting to know how others think and feel. Respect requires a special kind of sensitivity. It involves treating others civilly and courteously, accepting personal differences, listening to what others have to say, and refraining from ridicule.

Invite participants to think about respectful people. Ask:

- What do respectful people do?

Record responses on newsprint. As needed, you may add that respectful people:

- Treat others the way they would want to be treated
- Behave considerately
- Work to solve problems without violence
- Avoid intentionally ridiculing, embarrassing, or hurting others

Conclude the activity by inviting participants to discuss:

- What values or qualities are important to a respectful relationship?
- How can we demonstrate respect to our partners?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: SKILLS FOR COMMUNICATING DIGNITY —

## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

Every partner in a relationship has expectations. Any of these expectations may seem reasonable or unreasonable to the other partner. Mismatched expectations can lead to misunderstandings and conflict. By learning to identify and influence expectations, partners can dramatically improve the quality of their relationship.

Tell participants that the process of managing expectations involves several important steps. One at a time, write each step on newsprint and explain it in your own words, using the descriptions below as a guide. Invite comments after explaining each step.

#### 1. Identify communication preferences.

Some people like to process (think through and discuss) everything out loud. Others prefer to process on their own while exercising or cleaning the house. Some like to communicate immediately after an event. Others need time to think things through on their own first. Determine your and your partner's preferences and make an effort to respect them.

#### 2. Understand your partner's history and circumstances.

Everyone's background is unique. Some people are used to a great deal of attention and enthusiasm with even simple communications, like greetings and goodbyes. Others see these communications as a routine matter. It's helpful to recognize that these preferences are often rooted in past relationships with family members or previous partners.

#### 3. Clarify perceptions.

Never assume that you understand how your partner perceives an event or interaction. Clarify perceptions so

that undercurrents of emotions don't rise up into a huge wave later.

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Invite participants to think about a recent situation in which their expectations weren't met, or in which they were unable or unwilling to meet their partner's expectations. Ask them to spend a few minutes writing about this situation, including their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about how both partners might have managed expectations more effectively.

Invite participants to discuss this question to summarize the activity:

- How is expectation management related to dignity in relationships?



## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — DIGNITY

*Follow this Order of Service for the opening of Workshop 4, Dignity.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of dignity. Participants will explore their own definitions of dignity and consider dignity in the context of the inherent rights it bestows on partners in a relationship.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words or words of your own choosing:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Relating with dignity means partners are respectful and worthy of respect. Mutual dignity creates a safe atmosphere in which choices and difficulties can be honestly discussed and resolved. In promoting each partner's free, open, and loving self-expression, a couple affirms one another's inherent worth.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you

inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place where dignity is honored. Envision yourself being treated with dignity by your partner. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit during the reading.

Reading

Read "We Need One Another" by George E. Odell, 468 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. It may be read by an individual or the group.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

## LEADER RESOURCE 2: EMPATHY ROLE-PLAY

*Perform the skit twice. The first time, partner B will read only his/her dialogue, omitting the words in parentheses. The second time, partner B will read the words in parentheses to identify the different parts of his/her response.*

*Partner A [frustrated; talking about a co-worker]:*

It won't do any good to talk to him; he doesn't listen to anybody. He's going to do what he wants to do. What I say won't make a bit of difference.

*Partner B [with compassion in the voice]:*

You don't think you'll be heard. *(response to content)* It sounds like you're feeling hopeless and don't believe you'll be able to change things. *(response to feeling)*

## FIND OUT MORE

Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara. *Respect: An Exploration*. Perseus Books, 1999.

# WORKSHOP 5: GENEROSITY

## INTRODUCTION

*Let us be patient with one another,  
And even patient with ourselves.  
We have a long, long way to go.  
So let us hasten along the road,  
The road of human tenderness and generosity.  
Groping, we may find one another's hands in the dark.*  
— Emily Greene Balch, Unitarian and Quaker,  
1946 Nobel Peace Prize winner

This workshop's goal is to increase generosity in couples' relationships. However, many of its activities do not center directly on generosity. By deeply considering the attitudes of gratitude, abundance, and scarcity, couples are invited to examine the outlooks that can either foster or get in the way of giving and receiving generously. Discussion, exercises, and ritual engage partners in letting go of barriers to generosity and claiming it as a way of being in their relationships.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
Seventh Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Each person is an integral part of a much greater whole. Each couple is an integral part of a greater family, community, society, and nature. Generosity and gratitude demonstrate respect for this web, while nurturing the threads of interrelationship in our partnerships and beyond. Being grateful to and for each other, and for what life provides, enables a life of greater joy and integrity in this interdependent world.

Considerations for Adaptation

Activity 4, Ritual of Connecting with Our Generous Selves, includes a ceremony in which small pieces of paper are burned. Safety is of the utmost importance in this activity. Be sure to follow the preparation steps and safety guidelines given. If you do not have the ability to safely create a fire at your workshop site, or if any participants are sensitive to smoke, gather the pieces of paper for safe burning elsewhere.

## GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present a framework for increasing gratitude in relationships

- Offer a ritual for letting go of barriers to generosity

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on and write about the role of giving and receiving in their relationships
- Express gratitude to their partners
- Discuss their personal attitudes related to feelings of scarcity and abundance with their partners
- Identify personal barriers to generosity — both giving and receiving

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: Reflecting on Generosity and Gratitude	45
Activity 3: Abundance and Scarcity	20
Activity 4: Ritual of Connecting with Our Generous Selves	25
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Thank-You Cards	20

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Consider the guiding Principle for this session, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Take some moments to reflect on ways in which you use your own gifts to respect the interdependent web. Consider writing down at least ten gifts that you freely share with others.

Think about your own close relationships. Do you express gratitude for them regularly? If not, how could you do so?

Some of the most common prayers can be summed up simply: "Help!" or "Thank you." How do you express

gratitude through your spiritual practices? Take some time to engage in a practice that expresses or evokes your gratitude.

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Generosity](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Select one of the following readings from *Singing the Living Tradition*: 479, "An Awe So Quiet" by Denise Levertov; 480, "Let Us Open Our Minds"; or 498, "In the Quietness of This Place" by Howard Thurman. Hold it in readiness for the reading.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Generosity, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on dignity. Ask whether couples have noticed anything new about the way they relate to each other.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to a one-sentence comment.

Once you feel participants know each other well enough, you may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

## ACTIVITY 2: REFLECTING ON GENEROSITY AND GRATITUDE (45 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape

- Newsprint sheet with prepared questions (see Preparation)
- Writing paper (at least one sheet per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing
- Optional: Music and music player (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the following three questions on newsprint:
  - What have I received from this person?
  - What have I given to this person?
  - What troubles and difficulties have I caused this person?
- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.
- If desired, select some quiet, relaxing music to play in the background during the writing portion of this activity.

### Description of Activity

Ask participants to recall their thoughts when the opening meditation invited them to consider the gifts they bring to their relationship. Invite volunteers to call out one word that describes one of those gifts. Quickly list the responses on newsprint as they are offered. No discussion is necessary. When a variety of words have been listed, post the newsprint sheet on the wall.

Offer these or similar words to help participants focus on the meaning of generosity:

By reflecting on the gifts we have received, those we have given, and those we intend to give, we may make discoveries about our unique spiritual journey.

So often in relationships, we focus on getting rather than giving. We ask ourselves, "Is my partner serving my needs?" or "What has my partner done for the relationship lately?" And as the relationship progresses, we often begin to take our partner's gifts for granted. Cultivating both generosity and gratitude can help the relationship stay rich and vital.

Performing simple acts of kindness is a good start. But generosity can go much deeper. We can bestow all types of blessings on each other to enhance our intimate connection. Also, we can give generously as a way to make a ripple in the larger universe. Giving and sharing are spiritual acts that foster our growth in many ways.

Ask participants:

- What is the relationship between generosity and gratitude?
- In what ways can generosity and gratitude get out of balance between partners?
- Is it typical for each partner to think that she/he is more generous than the other? If so, what are some ways in which this dynamic can be addressed?

Explain to participants:

One way of increasing gratitude and generosity in a relationship is called Naikan. This reflective practice originated in twentieth-century Japan. It has roots in Buddhism and Eastern psychology. The word Naikan means "looking inside." Its practice cultivates awareness of the self in relationship to others.

Display the newsprint sheet that you prepared in advance with these three questions:

- What have I received from this person?
- What have I given to this person?
- What troubles and difficulties have I caused this person?

Explain that the practice of Naikan begins with these three simple questions. (They are articulated by Gregg Krech in the book *Naikan: Gratitude, Grace, and the Japanese Art of Self-Reflection*.) Ask participants:

- What questions — so often asked — *don't* you see here? (Examples: "What troubles has this person caused *me*?" or "What do *I* want?")

Explain that many people, in their day-to-day thinking, tend to focus on the negative — what their partner is doing wrong or has failed to do. Naikan encourages us to shift our focus to the positive — the many gifts offered by our partner. For example, if someone is continually disappointed because his/her partner doesn't clean the bathroom, Naikan does not encourage reflection on this perceived deficit. Instead, it encourages reflection on all the partner has given: "Yesterday she planted a beautiful tree in our yard." "He made me breakfast this morning when I was in a rush." "She went to a birthday party with me last week only because I wanted to go."

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Invite participants into a time of individual reflection on the three basic questions of Naikan. Encourage participants to write down specific examples from the last month or so. Explain that there will be an opportunity to share these responses with their partners later in the workshop and beyond.

Allow fifteen minutes for individual reflection. You may wish to play quiet, relaxing music in the background during this exercise.

After fifteen minutes, invite participants to pair up with their partners and spend another fifteen minutes sharing their responses. Explain that this is an opportunity for them to express gratitude to one another — to say "Thank you." Mention that it is okay if some lists are longer than others. It takes different people different amounts of time to think and write things down. And it is okay if in the past month one partner has indeed given more than the other — sometimes that happens in relationships. The best response to this is gratitude.

Suggest that partners focus on sharing their responses to the first two questions. If there is time, they may move on to the third question. Otherwise, this question can be saved for couples' consideration at home.

After fifteen minutes, re-gather the whole group. Ask:

- What did it feel like to share these lists with your partner? Were you surprised or particularly touched by anything that showed up on the lists?
- In the time of individual reflection, what did it feel like to notice things given and received?
- Have you experienced built-up tensions getting in the way of generosity and gratitude? If so, what can help you reconnect with a generous and grateful spirit?
- Does the gratitude experienced in this exercise inspire you to think or act differently? If so, how?

## **ACTIVITY 3: ABUNDANCE AND SCARCITY (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Writing paper (at least one sheet per participant)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### **Description of Activity**

Using these or similar words, invite participants to focus on the concepts of scarcity and abundance:

Our levels of generosity and gratitude can be affected by two spiritual outlooks: scarcity and abundance.

The spiritual mindset of scarcity is a "glass half empty" outlook — seeing such resources as time, energy,

money, and love as inadequate. A scarcity outlook can cause us to hoard our gifts, or to share our gifts only when we're sure we'll get something of equal or greater value in return.

A spiritual mindset of abundance perceives gifts such as time, energy, money, and love as plentiful and accessible. It involves a focus on gratitude for all that we are able to give and receive, rather than a focus on those things we are not giving or receiving.

Mindsets of scarcity and abundance can exist no matter how much money a person or family has. Extremely wealthy people can view resources as scarce, and people with very low incomes can experience life as abundant.

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Encourage participants to spend five minutes writing in response to the following question:

- Recall a time in your relationship when you were filled with a sense of abundance. What was it about that time that gave you a feeling of abundance?

After journaling, encourage participants to pair up with their partners and spend ten minutes sharing their responses with each other. Ask them to discuss:

- What can we do to increase our mutual sense of abundance in our relationship?

## **ACTIVITY 4: RITUAL OF CONNECTING WITH OUR GENEROUS SELVES (25 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Two-inch squares of blank paper (enough for every participant to have one, plus some extras)
- Pens or pencils
- A large fireproof bowl, chafing dish, or fireplace
- Matches or lighter
- Pitcher of water and/or fire extinguisher
- Optional: Music and a music player (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Ask in advance whether any participants have a sensitivity to smoke that would make it uncomfortable for them to be near burning papers.



- Check your meeting space in advance to determine whether it can accommodate the burning of paper without setting off fire alarms.
- If fire safety cannot be guaranteed, or if the fire ceremony cannot be completed in your meeting space for any other reason, arrange to complete the ceremony in a safe location after the workshop.
- If you are using a fireproof bowl, place it near the flaming chalice. You can use its flame to ignite the papers. Place the fire extinguisher or pitcher of water close by.
- If desired, select soft, meditative music to play during the latter portion of the activity.

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity using these or similar words:

All of us bring to this workshop a great deal of wisdom relating to what we want from and bring to a loving relationship. Sometimes, despite good intentions, emotional or spiritual obstacles can get in the way of being our most generous selves. Those spiritual obstacles might be experiences, attitudes, feelings, or beliefs. Whatever they are, this ritual helps us name and let go of our obstacles.

Distribute the blank squares of paper, plus pens or pencils. Tell participants:

On one side of the paper, I invite you to write down something you do that gets in the way of giving. On the other side, write down something you do that gets in the way of receiving.

Have extra slips handy in case participants want to write more than two obstacles.

Allow a few minutes for writing. You may wish to begin playing soft, meditative music in the background at this time and throughout the rest of the activity.

When the group is done writing, explain:

You will now have an opportunity to destroy the paper as part of a symbolic fire ceremony. As you do, you may choose whether or not to name your obstacles out loud.

During the ritual that follows, *safety is of the utmost importance*. Be prepared to use the fire extinguisher or pitcher of water if needed.

If for safety or health reasons you cannot burn the papers in your meeting space, adapt the ritual by inviting participants to rip their paper into small pieces, which you will burn outside after the workshop.

Begin the ritual with these or similar words:

Fire is one of the essential elements in our universe. Pagan and earth-centered traditions recognize fire as one of four elements: earth, air, water, and fire. Fire is a destroyer, but also a creator.

In this ceremony, let us cast to the flames those things we need to relinquish from the past. Let us create the fertile ground for our future. Let us toss into the fire the experiences or habits, burdens or doubts, that we wish to release. Let us let go of those things that block us from being our most generous selves.

Begin the process of burning by using your own paper to catch a flame from the chalice. As you drop the burning paper into the bowl, dish, or fireplace, name what is being cast to the flames, if you are comfortable doing so. Then invite participants to take turns igniting their papers and casting them into the receptacle.

When everyone has had an opportunity to burn a paper, invite the group into silent meditation. Sit for two minutes of silence before offering the following prayer:

Spirit of Life, Spirit of Love,  
that which is the basis of our tears and our laughter,  
may the sacred fires consume those things which have hindered or hurt us,  
those things which were getting in the way,  
those things which we no longer need to hold on to.  
May we let go of them . . . and move on.  
May we be our most generous and grateful selves.  
May we seek a way, each day, to connect with the truth inside us,  
to foster renewal, to tend to the spirit,  
to hear our inner song, to connect with those whom we love.  
May our spirits sing again.  
Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

Be sure the fire is fully extinguished before continuing with the workshop.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

## Description of Activity

Summarize the workshop and its focus on generosity and gratitude. Invite participants to share their feelings about these concepts. Ask:

- How are you feeling at the close of these activities?
- What may be the next step in your exploration of generosity and gratitude?

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one word as a benediction.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

### Affection Connection — Generosity

Extend your exploration of generosity by trying one or more of these activities on your own.

#### For Individuals: The Question of Money

Money is one of the most powerful and emotion-laden symbols in our culture. Gratitude, generosity, scarcity, abundance — all the issues discussed in this *Principled Commitment* workshop affect our relationship with money.

Spend some time this week writing about your feelings related to money and how it is used.

- How did you see money discussed and used in your family of origin? Did it have a certain kind of emotional energy around it? Consider childhood experiences of deprivation or affluence, budgeting, and attitudes about spending and saving money. How did these experiences positively or negatively shape your views of money?
- Today, do you feel your approach to money is governed more by a mindset of scarcity or a mindset of abundance? Remember that these mindsets are often more related to feelings than to financial figures.

#### For Couples: Sharing Thoughts about Money

After completing the exercise above, share some of your thoughts with your partner. Consider discussing areas in which you disagree on the subject.

#### For Couples with Children: Counting Our Blessings

In our very busy lives, we often forget to "count our blessings." At dinner or another family meal, go around the table and give each person an opportunity to name one thing she/he is thankful for.

Consider using this simple activity on a regular basis. It can also be used before bed or in individual journaling. The more we think about things we are thankful for, the more we can live with a spirit of abundance rather than scarcity.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — THANK-YOU CARDS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Blank greeting cards with plain fronts (see Preparation)

- Envelopes for cards
- Pens
- Art supplies for decorating the cards, such as construction paper, scissors, markers, glue, small letter stencils, glitter, and pictures cut from magazines
- Tables (see Preparation)
- Newspaper, plastic tablecloths, or other means of covering the tables
- Optional: Newsprint, easel, and markers

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Obtain plain white or cream-colored greeting cards, blank on the front and inside. You can purchase them at most craft or office supply stores, or you can make your own by cutting letter-size card stock in half and folding each half into a card. Be sure the cards will fit into the envelopes. Provide enough cards and envelopes for each participant to have at least one of each, plus some extras.
- Arrange the room — or arrange for a room — so that participants can work at tables. Cover the tables with newspapers or plastic tablecloths.
- Gather the art supplies. Depending upon the level of comfort of your "artists," you might cut out letters, shapes, and pictures that participants can choose from rather than having to make their own.
- You may wish to make a sample card ahead of time.

### **Description of Activity**

Point out that generally, we *feel* much more gratitude than we express. In an almost entirely volunteer organization like a congregation, many members share their gifts on a regular basis.

Ask participants:

In the last few weeks, was there a person in the congregation who showed generosity or a random act of kindness? Think of people who have gone out of their way to be helpful in some way, whether to you personally, to someone you know, or to the congregation in general.

You may wish to invite the group to brainstorm together to identify generous people. For example, they might name specific people who served as ushers in the worship service, made coffee, or taught children's classes. List the names on newsprint, if desired.

Invite participants to each make a thank-you card for one of the people who showed generosity. To ensure that all participants don't choose the same person from the list, you can solicit volunteers for writing to each person. Distribute art materials and encourage participants to decorate the cards as they wish. Let them know that they have just fifteen minutes to create a card.

When participants have finished decorating their cards, ask them to write a brief thank-you note inside the card identifying the kindness they are grateful for. They may sign the card or remain anonymous, as they wish.

Ask participants to put their card in an envelope and address it. They may mail the cards, give them to the intended receivers the next time they see them, or give them to the leaders to deliver.

### **Including All Participants**

If you have relatively new members in your group who are unable to think of someone in the congregation, let them know that they may make a card for someone outside of the congregation. Adapt the art materials and decorating methods as needed to suit each participant's physical abilities.

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — GENEROSITY

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 5, Generosity.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of generosity. Its activities will explore generosity as well as gratitude, scarcity, and abundance.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words or words of your own choosing:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Each person is an integral part of a much greater whole. Each couple is an integral part of a greater family, community, society, and nature. Generosity and gratitude demonstrate respect for this web, while nurturing the threads of interrelationship in our

partnerships and beyond. Being grateful to and for each other, and for what life provides, enables a life of greater joy and integrity in this interdependent world.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Welcome to this place of connections and interconnections. This is a time to focus on the present, to focus on this time you have reserved for being together as a couple. It is a gift you are giving to each other. Consider what generosity means to you. What gifts do you bring to your relationship? What more can you offer?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit during the reading.

Reading

Read one of the following selections from *Singing the Living Tradition*: 479, "An Awe So Quiet" by Denise Levertov; 480, "Let Us Open Our Minds"; or 498, "In the Quietness of This Place" by Howard Thurman.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

## FIND OUT MORE

Krech, Greg. *Naikan: Gratitude, Grace, and the Japanese Art of Self-Reflection*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2002.

# WORKSHOP 6: CONNECTION

## INTRODUCTION

*Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect . . .*  
— E.M. Forster, early-twentieth-century British novelist

A healthy, satisfying relationship is not based on love alone. Rather, it is supported by a web of qualities such as those explored in this program: intention, humility, trust, dignity, connection, generosity, play, collaboration, and commitment. When couples integrate these qualities into their lives, they become stronger as individuals and as a couple.

In this workshop, participants work toward enhancing the connection they feel with their partners. They explore how couples connect and how to deepen that sense of connection (physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually); how to complement each other's need for connection; and how they can grow as a couple by connecting to families, friends, and community. They will also explore their individual and/or mutual needs for higher purpose and their connections with the larger web of existence.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
Seventh Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Connection is that deep sense of knowing another person, which gives us the confidence to live in the world as part of a couple. The way we, as partners, communicate with one another — physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually — and the way we connect with others reflect how we value our interdependent web. Further, all of our actions and attitudes as partners are shaped by an interdependent web of family, friends, environment, community, and world.

### Considerations for Adaptation

Alternate Activity 2, Four Dimensions of Connection, can provide couples with concrete ideas for activities that enhance or sustain connections. You may wish to consider using it if your group is looking for directly applicable skills. Activity 2, The Art of Connection, is

more playful and offers couples a connecting experience in and of itself. Activity 3, Connecting from the Heart, can be emotionally intense. If your couples have had difficulty "going deep" with each other in previous workshops, you may wish to preface the activity with worship, meditation, or a ritual that can help participants open up to their partners.

## GOALS

This workshop will:

- Encourage partners to name ways that their partners can better connect with them
- Provide couples with an opportunity to playfully connect with one another
- Underscore the value of each partner's connection with friends, family, and others beyond the relationship

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss the ways that they connect with their partners — physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually
- Name practices that can deepen connection within their relationship
- Identify ways to grow as a couple by connecting to others and to a higher purpose

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: The Art of Connection	20
Activity 3: Connecting from the Heart	35
Activity 4: Strengthening Your Social Web	20
Activity 5: Finding Your Thread in the Interdependent Web	15
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Social	20

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Consider the guiding Principle for this workshop, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part," and the workshop's focus on connection. Take some time to reflect on ways you connect with others in physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual ways. You may have a different answer for each category of people with whom you are in relationship, such as a partner, family, or friends. Are there ways you would like to connect, but don't? How can you change that? Reflect on how Unitarian Universalism and/or your congregation support those connections.

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service – Connection](#)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Find the poem "Connections Are Made Slowly," 568 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Hold it in readiness for the reading.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Connection, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on generosity. Ask whether couples have noticed anything new about the way they relate to each other.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to one-sentence comments.

Once you feel participants know each other well enough, you may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to participants' volume, and ask those who speak softly to speak louder.

## ACTIVITY 2: THE ART OF CONNECTION (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Drawing paper
- Pens, pencils, crayons, and/or markers
- Tables or hard surfaces for drawing

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for drawing. Arrange chairs so that



couples can sit together and draw. Try to provide enough space between couples so that they can speak privately to one another.

### Description of Activity

Introduce the concept of connection using these or similar words:

Psychology describes at least four dimensions of human experience: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Couples can feel connection in any and all of these areas. They can work to maintain and enhance their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual connections.

Sometimes our sense of connection can best be expressed in ways that have nothing to do with words. The way partners treat each other, the activities they enjoy together, and their shared goals or spirituality may say more about their relationship than an entire volume of love poetry or romantic stories.

Invite couples to sit together at the tables. Distribute one or two pieces of drawing paper to each couple, and let them select drawing implements. Explain:

You are going to make a drawing together. Here's how: One partner will think of an activity or situation that helps you two connect. Without saying anything, that partner will draw one element of the activity or situation. For example, if you enjoy the conversations you have while walking the dog together, you might draw just the dog or just one person walking.

When the first partner finishes drawing that one element, the second partner will draw another element — without asking what the first partner intended the picture to show.

You must complete the activity in silence. Words are not allowed — nothing written, signed, or spoken. The communication must happen entirely through the drawing.

Continue taking turns drawing one element at a time. It's okay if one partner doesn't understand what the other intended to draw. For example, if the first partner drew a dog, the second partner may think it's a horse and draw a saddle to represent horseback riding together. That's okay. Just keep going, without speaking, and see what your drawing becomes.

Allow the participants to draw for about ten minutes. Then invite partners to spend a few minutes talking with one another about the connections they were attempting to illustrate.

After allowing a suitable length of time for partner discussions, re-gather the large group. Invite volunteer

couples to share some of the hits and misses they experienced in the activity. Ask:

- How did it feel to draw something together without the benefit of words?
- What did you learn about yourself or about the two of you as a couple?
- Did you learn anything about nonverbal communication? If so, what?

### Including All Participants

Encourage couples to adapt this activity to work with each partner's physical abilities.

## ACTIVITY 3: CONNECTING FROM THE HEART (35 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint sheet with prepared questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Optional: Music and music player (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the following questions on a sheet of newsprint:
  - What can I do to help you feel more connected to me?
  - If I were to do that, how would it make a difference for you?
  - What core emotion is at the heart of that?
- If desired, select a recording of soothing instrumental music to play in the background during the activity. This can help prevent couples from overhearing one another.

### Description of Activity

This activity allows couples to take turns questioning each other to reach the heart of what makes them feel connected to each other. To create a sense of privacy, you may want to play background music or suggest that the couples spread out around the meeting space.

Explain that in this activity, one partner in each couple will ask a set of predetermined questions while the other partner responds. Display the sheet of newsprint you

prepared in advance, and draw participants' attention to the three questions:

- What can I do to help you feel more connected to me?
- If I were to do that, how would it make a difference for you?
- What core emotion is at the heart of that?

Point out that each question invites the responder to look deeper inside to explore new levels of understanding. Explain that the questioner will pose the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. After receiving an answer to the second question, the questioner asks the third. She/he will then continue asking the third question until the responding partner expresses satisfaction that the core emotion behind the feeling of connection has been identified.

Advise the couples not to assume they know where the answers are headed. The questioner should listen actively, using an encouraging tone of voice, so that the partner feels welcome to search deeper.

After ten minutes, ask the partners to switch roles and repeat the process.

After both partners have taken a ten-minute turn responding to the questions, re-gather the large group. Invite participants to share their feelings about the activity. Ask:

- Did you learn anything new about your partner or yourself? If so, how will you apply what you've learned?
- Did you feel you were able to reach down to the heart of your feeling of connection? If so, how did that feel?
- Might having that information change anything about how you connect as a couple in the future? If so, how?

## **ACTIVITY 4: STRENGTHENING YOUR SOCIAL WEB (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Newsprint sheet with prepared questions (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write the following questions on a sheet of newsprint:
  - What bonds do you have with others? Are they strong enough to help support the couple or an individual partner in times of need?
  - Which of the activities we listed would feel comfortable as ways to forge additional relationships?
  - In what ways, if any, does your faith or your congregation help you form connections with others?

### **Description of Activity**

Offer these words of focus for the activity:

At the start of a romantic relationship, it is not unusual for couples to enjoy tuning out the rest of the world. They may be almost completely focused on each other as they get to know each other and revel in their new love.

But sustained relationships are often strengthened when partners have close friends and family in their lives. Through these connections, couples benefit from the wisdom, enthusiasm, experience, and support of others. Care and closeness with others can be especially helpful in times of illness, financial struggle, or loss.

Not all relationships with family and friends are healthy and satisfying. However, a couple benefits by building those relationships that are positive forces in their lives.

Ask participants to call out some of the ways in which they connect with family, friends, and others outside of their romantic partnership. List their responses on newsprint. For example, they might mention family holiday celebrations; helping family, friends, or neighbors with chores; taking a class; entertaining guests; doing volunteer work; participating in a special interest group; developing friendships in the workplace; and so on.

Invite the group to reflect on the list. Ask:

- Of these connections, are there more that serve individual partners or the couple as a unit?
- How can outside connections support couples as a unit?
- How can you tell when a friendship supports or detracts from a couple's connection? What is the relationship between connection and trust in these situations?

Invite participants to pair up with their partners and spend ten minutes discussing their emotional involvement with friends and family. Display the sheet of newsprint you prepared earlier, and ask participants to consider these questions:

- What bonds do you have with others? Are they strong enough to help support the couple or an individual partner in times of need?
- Which of the activities we listed would feel comfortable as ways to forge additional relationships?
- In what ways, if any, does your faith or your congregation help you form connections with others?

## **ACTIVITY 5: FINDING YOUR THREAD IN THE INTERDEPENDENT WEB (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large ball of thick yarn (at least eight yards of length per participant)
- Scissors (at least one pair)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- If you have a skein of yarn, roll it into a ball.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite participants to form a circle. Explain the activity using these or similar words:

I'm going to hold on to the loose end of the yarn and toss the ball to someone across the circle. As I do, I'll name a way that I feel connected to that person.

Demonstrate the action described above. Invite the recipient to follow suit:

Now it's your turn. Hold on to the strand of yarn while you toss the ball to a new person. As you do, name a way that you feel connected to that person.

Encourage participants to continue the process until everyone is holding on to part of the "web."

When everyone is included in the web, invite participants to raise the web above their heads to see its beauty. Ask them to pull backward gently to feel its strength.

While continuing to hold on to the web, invite participants to describe the beauty and the strength they have found in interdependence — not only interdependence with other individuals, but also with humanity as a whole, animals, and the natural world.

Pass around scissors so that participants may each take home a piece of the web as a memento of their connections within this community.

### **Including All Participants**

Invite the group's creativity in making this activity accessible for all participants, regardless of ability.

## **CLOSING (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.
- Decide whether you will use Alternate Activity 2 in Workshop 7, so that you can ask participants to bring the appropriate items to the next session.

### **Description of Activity**

Summarize the workshop and its focus on connection. Invite participants to share their feelings about this concept. Ask:

- How are you feeling at the close of these activities?
- What may be the next step in your exploration of connection?

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared.

If you will be using Alternate Activity 2 in Workshop 7, invite participants to bring favorite toys or games (theirs or their children's) to the next session. Explain that they will have an opportunity to briefly demonstrate or talk about the items they bring.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about feeling connected or about this workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for

every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
  - When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
  - What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Did the participants seem to feel comfortable enough to talk about their need for connection? If not, how might we have helped them feel more comfortable?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

### Affection Connection — Connection

Remaining physically and emotionally connected can be a challenge when a relationship includes conflicting demands on each partner's time and attention. It is not uncommon for couples to end a week feeling as though they've hardly seen each other, let alone experienced a profound sense of connection. These activities will enable you to explore ways of staying connected, even when you are apart by virtue of distance or distractions.

### For Individuals: Reflecting on Connections

Spend some time writing whatever comes to mind to complete these thoughts:

- "I feel disconnected from you when..."
- "Even when we are busy or apart, I feel close to you when..."

### For Couples: Staying Connected

Together, write down some ideas for creating and maintaining connection. Encourage each other to be open-minded and respectful of boundaries.

When distance is involved, some ideas to consider include:

- Phone calls, text messages, instant messages (perhaps a quick check-in, a loving message, or calling at pre-arranged times)
- Letters, by postal mail or e-mail
- Love notes hidden for discovery during a partner's absence
- Playing a CD or tape of your partner's favorite music

When distractions are an issue, consider:

- Travel together (day trips or longer vacations)
- Shared meals (preparation, dining)
- Lighting a chalice and singing a song together before meals
- Creating a new tradition
- Finding uninterrupted time for sexual activity
- Attending worship services as a couple
- Taking classes together
- Reading aloud to each other
- Shared volunteer or social action activities
- Joint home repair or landscaping projects

After brainstorming a list, consider whether each idea will realistically suit your personalities, tastes, and lifestyle. Remove from your list any ideas that are not mutually agreeable.

When your list feels complete, select one or two ideas and set a goal for the coming week. At the week's end, review your goal. Discuss what made achieving it possible or what got in the way of achieving it. Set another goal for the next week.

### For Couples with Children: Family Connections

Have a family discussion to brainstorm ideas for creating and maintaining connections with one another. Make sure everyone gets a chance to give at least one idea. After generating a list, select two or three ideas that will

realistically suit your personalities, tastes, and lifestyle. Set a timetable for when and how you might begin to carry them out.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — SOCIAL JUSTICE (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint sheet with prepared list of questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Writing paper (at least one sheet per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write the following questions on a sheet of newsprint:
  - How do, or how might, your personal connections with others inspire you to work for social justice?
  - How do, or how might, emotional connections with strangers inspire you to work for social justice?
  - How can the emotional connection of your relationship draw you into deeper connection with people around the world? How does, or how might, that foster work for justice?
- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### **Description of Activity**

This activity is designed to broaden the discussion of "connection" to encompass social justice.

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Display the list of questions that you prepared in advance. Invite participants to spend some time silently reflecting on these questions and writing responses to them. You may wish to give them some examples, such as:

- Personal connections: "Because I care deeply about my mother-in-law, who has multiple sclerosis, I have written letters to elected officials about health care reform and wheelchair accessibility requirements."
- Emotional connections with strangers: "I resolved to take action on the situation in Sudan when I saw an interview with a young girl from

Darfur. I felt a strong empathetic connection with her and I knew I had to do something."

After allowing ten minutes for solo reflection, invite participants to re-gather in the large group for discussion. Acknowledge that some individuals and couples are more active in working for social justice than others, and that is all right.

Invite discussion by asking:

- Would anyone like to share some of the ways that personal relationships or emotional connections with strangers have inspired you to work for social justice?
- What are some of the ways you identified in which the emotional connection of your relationship can draw you into deeper connection with people around the world?
- How are love and justice related in the scenarios you described?
- How would you like to use your love to create more justice in the world?

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CONNECTION (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape
- Writing paper (at least one sheet per person)
- Pens or pencils

### **Description of Activity**

Ask participants to recall the opening meditation, in which they envisioned themselves connecting with their partners. Invite them to call out one word that describes how that connection makes them feel. Quickly list the responses on newsprint. After a variety of words have been suggested, post the list on the wall.

Introduce the next exercise with these or similar words:

Psychologists describe at least four dimensions of human experience: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Couples can feel connection in any and all of these areas. In this activity, we will identify some concrete ways in which couples can develop connection in each area.

Across the top of a sheet of newsprint, write the terms "Physical," "Emotional," "Intellectual," and "Spiritual." Invite participants to think of ways that each of these types of connections can be sustained or enhanced. Begin by asking:

- What do you do (or what would you like to do) to enhance the physical connection in your relationship?

Write participants' responses under "Physical."

Repeat this process for the other three terms. Some repetition may occur — for example, one person might list sexual activity under physical, but another person might consider sexual activity a way to express an emotional connection.

After participants have suggested ideas for all four categories, post the list on the wall. Invite participants to consider whether any of the activities listed are, or could become, part of their personal "connection toolbox." Suggest that they jot down their favorite ideas for later use. Mention that the Taking It Home "Affection Connection" activities will give them further opportunities to explore these issues.

Introduce the next discussion topic with these or similar words:

Each couple needs a different amount of connection to feel satisfied. Within couples, partners may have different needs. One partner may enjoy reaching out to the other by phone several times a day, while the other partner may find that frequency bothersome.

Ask:

- What are some contexts or areas in which partners might experience a difference in their need for connection?

Write responses on newsprint. Examples might include frequency of sexual intimacy, need for private time, interest in athletic activities, desire to travel, and so on.

Encourage further discussion by asking:

- How can you lovingly work to find balance or agreement in areas where you do not have the same need for connection?

Encourage participants to observe their own behavior during the coming week and to note any occasions when they felt the need for either more connection or less. They may find it enlightening to share their observations with each other at the end of the week.

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — CONNECTION

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 6, Connection.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of connection. Participants will explore how connections are established, the function of connection within a relationship, and how a sense of connection can be strengthened.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater connection among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Connection is that deep sense of knowing another person, which gives us the confidence to live in the world as part of a couple. The way we, as partners, communicate with one another — physically,

emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually — reflects how we value our interdependent web. So does the way we connect with others. Further, all of our actions and attitudes as partners are shaped by an interdependent web of family, friends, environment, community, and world.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves". . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place of connection. Envision yourself connecting with your partner. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit as I read the poem.

Reading

Read "Connections Are Made Slowly" by Marge Piercy, 568 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

## FIND OUT MORE

Gottman, John M., and Nan Silver. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*. Three Rivers Press, 1999.

Kellerman, Lois, and Nelly Bly. *Marriage from the Heart: Eight Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together*. Penguin Compass, 2002.



## WORKSHOP 7: PLAY

### INTRODUCTION

*It is a happy talent to know how to play.*  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson, nineteenth-century  
author and speaker, trained as a Unitarian  
minister

Play may not be the first concept to come to mind when you consider the components of a strong, committed relationship, but it is necessary. Humor and playfulness can help partners connect, relieve tension, and solve problems together. A playful approach to life's demands is an integral factor in maintaining balance.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
Fourth Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

Who says a free and responsible search for truth and meaning can't be fun? A spirit of playfulness can open new possibilities in our understanding of life, as it opens us to deeper understanding of our partners. Play can create strong connections that sustain couples through difficulties. Play can help us accept our own, our partners', and the universe's foibles. Play can freely and responsibly transform a dull day into a day of laughter, joy, meaning, and truth.

#### Considerations for Adaptation

If the workshop is conducted at a retreat, you may want to invite participants to bring games to share or play a fun, get-to-know-you game together. See the Find Out More section of this workshop plan for a link to "Major FUN's Funny Pointless Games Collection," which presents several options for group games.

When designing a retreat, consider using some of these more playful activities to balance the intensity of some of the activities from other workshops.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Promote the value of play in relationships
- Help couples invite the spirit of play into their everyday interactions
- Present the concept of "principled play" — play that upholds the worth and dignity of both partners

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Play together
- Discuss the role of play in different stages of their life
- Brainstorm guidelines for principled play
- Generate ideas for playful activities that they can engage in with their partners

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: The Role of Play in Relationships	30
Activity 3: Playing with Principle	20
Activity 4: Playing Games	40
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — UU Trivia Hunt	30
Alternate Activity 2: Playful Brainstorming for Couples	30

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Set aside some time for personal reflection and meditation on the subject of play. Consider: Do you think the universe has a sense of humor? Is playfulness part of your spirituality? You may also wish to reflect on the role of play in your life: Have you been playful recently? If so, who were you with? Did it bring you closer to that person, or perhaps make you feel farther apart? Would you like more play in your daily life? How can you make that happen?

Consider wearing something playful to the workshop to set the mood.

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Small containers of bubble solution (one per participant)
- Bubble wands (one per participant)
- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)

- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Play](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Find reading 664, "Give Us the Spirit of the Child," in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Decide whether to read it solo or as a responsive reading. If you will read it responsively, gather additional hymnbooks as needed.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Have the bubble solution and wands ready for distribution during the worship.

### Description of Activity

If you have asked participants to bring toys and games to this workshop, invite them to place their toys or games near the altar or centering table.

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Play, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on connection. Ask whether couples have noticed anything new about the way they relate to each other.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to a one-sentence comment.

Once you feel participants know each other well enough, you may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

## ACTIVITY 2: THE ROLE OF PLAY IN RELATIONSHIPS (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel

- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape

### Description of Activity

Ask participants to recall the guided meditation from the workshop's opening and how they envisioned interacting playfully. Invite them to call out one word that describes why that virtual experience was enjoyable. List the responses on newsprint. No discussion is necessary. When a variety of words have been listed, post the newsprint on the wall.

Explain that the topic for this workshop is the role of play in relationships. Encourage the keeping of a playful mindset for today's activities. You may wish to set the stage with a joke or two of your own, or begin with the following joke, found on the Internet:

Q: How many Unitarian Universalists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: The Unitarian Universalists wish to make the following statement: "We choose not to make a statement either in favor of or against the need for a light bulb; however, if in your own journey you have found that light bulbs work for you, that is fine. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb and present it next month at our annual light bulb Sunday service, during which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, three-way, long-life, and tinted, all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence."

If time allows, you may also invite a few participants to share their favorite jokes. Ask them to be mindful that not everyone is comfortable with risqué humor or humor that plays upon gender and ethnic stereotypes.

Offer these or similar words of focus:

Play is an important part of a child's development. It is an avenue for growth, assimilation, learning, sensory experience, and self-expression. Child development experts have suggested that children need to play in order to grow and thrive.

Researchers also know that play is an important aspect of the human experience for adults. We like to laugh, play games, and use our imagination and creativity throughout our lives.

In relationships, a spirit of playfulness can ease tensions, build intimacy, facilitate connection, help us solve problems, and lower stress. Today we'll look at some ways in which we can bring the spirit of play into our relationships to help them thrive.

Invite participants to engage in a guided reflection about how the meaning of play has changed throughout their lives. Explain that as you ask each question, they are to reflect on it silently. (Keep the pace brisk, allowing just three to five seconds of silence after each question.)

Ask:

- Picture yourself as a preschooler. How did you play? What did you enjoy the most?
- In elementary school, how did you play? What did you enjoy the most?
- In high school, how did you play? What did you enjoy the most?
- Now that you're an adult, do you still play? If so, what do you enjoy the most?

Invite participants into the discussion by asking:

- How has play changed for you at each stage of the life cycle?
- What are some ways you enjoy playing today?
- Is it easier to be playful when you're around children or when you're around adults? Why?
- What makes it okay for adults to be playful together?

## ACTIVITY 3: PLAYING WITH PRINCIPLE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Copies of Handout 1: [Playing with Principle](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)

### Description of Activity

Share these or similar words with participants:

Playing together as a couple can be tremendously bonding. However, unfair play, such as hurtful teasing and ridicule, can damage relationships. How can we bring the spirit of play into our relationships in a principled manner, one that honors the Unitarian Universalist Principles we seek to uphold in Principled Commitment?

Ask participants to brainstorm a list of guidelines for "principled play" between partners. Take notes on newsprint.

After the newsprint sheet has been filled or the group is finished with ideas, ask participants:

- What are some ways you can remind yourself or your partner about these guidelines? Can these reminders be playful in and of themselves?

Distribute Handout 1, *Playing with Principle*. Explain that the handout offers questions for partners to ask themselves when interacting playfully around sensitive issues. You can review and discuss the handout with participants or ask them to review it at home.

## ACTIVITY 4: PLAYING GAMES (40 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Tables (see Preparation)
- Newspaper, plastic tablecloths, or other means of covering the tables
- Writing paper (at least two sheets per couple)
- Pens or pencils
- A variety of simple art supplies (such as polymer clay, crayons, construction paper, markers, scissors, die-cut symbols, and pipe cleaners)
- Newsprint sheet with prepared questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Clock, watch, or timer

### Preparation for Activity

- Arrange the room — or arrange for a room — so that participants can work on their art projects at tables. Cover the tables with newspapers or plastic tablecloths.
- Place writing paper, pens or pencils, and an assortment of art supplies on each table.
- Write the following questions on a sheet of newsprint:
  - How have changes in the family or changes in technology affected your play?
  - Are you more or less playful now than you were in the beginning stages of your relationship?
  - What is the most playful thing you have done together in the past month?
  - What playful things would you like to do together in the next month?
  - What playful things would you like to do together in the next year?

### Description of Activity

Share these or similar words to focus the activity:

Sometimes finding time for play is key — time to get away from the routine, relax, laugh, and be playful. Sometimes play is not something that needs time set aside — it can be a spirit we bring to our everyday activities. Sometimes it's not a matter of time at all, and finding the energy to play is a more crucial issue.

How do you play in your relationship? How would you like to increase or maintain your playfulness? We'll start by considering the role of play at the beginning of our relationships.

Invite partners to work together to write a list of the playful activities or patterns they pursued in courtship and in the beginning phases of their committed partnership.

After five minutes, suggest that they spend a few more minutes creating a list of the playful activities they enjoy together now.

After another five minutes, invite the partners to spend an additional fifteen minutes reviewing and discussing their two lists. Display the newsprint sheet you prepared in advance, and suggest that couples use these questions as the focus of their discussion:

- How have changes in the family or changes in technology affected your play?
- Are you more or less playful now than you were in the beginning stages of your relationship?
- What is the most playful thing you have done together in the past month?
- What playful things would you like to do together in the next month?
- What playful things would you like to do together in the next year?

After fifteen minutes have passed, invite couples to spend five minutes using the art materials to create a representation of a playful activity they've discussed.

After five minutes, bring the whole group back together. Encourage couples to playfully share their creations with the group.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of customized *Taking It Home* handout (see Preparation)

## Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop. Download it to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

## Description of Activity

Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas discussed in this workshop. Encourage participants to monitor their own level of playfulness in the next week, especially in interactions with their partner.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Explain that this workshop's Affection Connection provides the opportunity for couples to review the covenants they drafted at the beginning of the program. They will have another opportunity to finalize their covenants before the end of the program.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about play or this workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to be the most fun for participants? Why?
- To what extent did everyone get involved in the "play"?
- Were we, as leaders, enthusiastic and playful?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?

- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

### Affection Connection — Play

Extend the workshop by trying this activity on your own.

### For Couples: Continuing the Covenant

At the beginning of *Principled Commitment*, you began to sketch out what a covenant between you and your partner might look like. Now that you have considered the concepts of humility, trust, dignity, generosity, connection, and play, have you gained new insights as a couple that you would like to see reflected in your covenant? Work together as a couple to revise or reaffirm the covenant you drafted, exploring new insights, conclusions, and dreams for your relationship.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — UU TRIVIA HUNT (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 2: [UU Trivia Hunt](#) (included in this document) one per participant) (see Preparation)
- Leader Resource 2: [UU Trivia Hunt Answer Key](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Pens or pencils
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell (loud enough to be heard throughout the building)
- A variety of small treats, such as chocolate kisses (at least one per participant). See "Including All Participants," below for ideas.

### Preparation for Activity

- Download Handout 2, UU Trivia Hunt, to your computer. Customize it by choosing, adding, or deleting questions. Select questions that your group will find challenging, yet will be able to

answer using resources found within the congregation's building. Make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

- Download Leader Resource 2, UU Trivia Hunt Answer Key, and customize it to correspond with the handout. Be sure to fill in the answers to questions that refer to your specific congregation.
- Arrange for participants to have access to various rooms in the congregation's building, such as the library, the sanctuary, and religious education classrooms, where they can find answers to the questions. Ask permission from appropriate staff members and departments, and find out whether any rooms will be in use by other groups during the workshop. If certain areas will be off-limits, arrange to place resources such as UU history books, religious education curricula, *Singing the Living Tradition*, and the UUA directory in an accessible area.

### **Description of Activity**

Divide the group into two teams of couples, with about the same number of people on each team. Give each person a copy of your customized handout and a pen or pencil.

Explain the rules of the game:

Work with your team members to answer as many of the questions as you can in the next 20 minutes.

You can go anywhere in the building. [Or, if certain areas are off-limits, clearly identify where participants may and may not go.] Feel free to use any books or other information sources you find.

I'll ring the bell when you have five minutes left, again when you have two minutes, and again when time is up.

Start the trivia hunt, keeping track of the time and ringing the bell as described above.

When time is up, regather the group. Ask each team how many answers they found. Go through the questions and provide the correct answers.

When all questions have been answered, award everyone with a treat.

### **Including All Participants**

Providing a variety of treats, including some nonfood items, will allow participants with food sensitivities or other special dietary needs to choose a treat they can enjoy.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PLAYFUL BRAINSTORMING FOR COUPLES (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Ahead of time, invite participants to bring toys or games to the workshop if they wish.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite participants who brought toys and games to the workshop to show these items to the group.

Invite volunteers to share some of their favorite ways of playing as a couple. While these activities may involve children, the adults' fun is the primary focus of this discussion. List responses on newsprint. You might offer the following suggestions, if participants do not mention them:

- Board games or video games
- Entertaining guests
- Listening to or making music
- Dancing
- Hobbies
- Sports
- Making love (Point out that sexuality is an area filled with playful possibilities, such as sharing verbal fantasies, role-playing, taking bubble baths together, or letting go during intimacy to allow for experimentation and, at times, laughter.)

Invite participants to pair up with their partners and discuss how they can make time to do playful things more often or make the most of the time they already have for play.

## HANDOUT 1: PLAYING WITH PRINCIPLE

In relationships, a spirit of playfulness can ease tensions, build intimacy, facilitate connection, help us solve problems, and lower stress. Laughing, playing games, and using imagination and creativity can strengthen a relationship. However, unfair play, such as hurtful teasing and ridicule, can damage relationships. How can we bring the spirit of play into our relationships in a principled manner, one that honors the worth and dignity of our partners?

The nonprofit website [HelpGuide.org](http://HelpGuide.org) recommends considering the following questions before approaching "ego-sensitive subjects" through playful communication:

- Are you feeling calm, energetic, and warmly connected to your partner?
- Is your true intent to communicate positive feelings?
- Are you certain your humorous gesture will be understood and appreciated?
- Are you aware of the emotional tone of the nonverbal messages you are sending?
- Are you sensitive to the nonverbal signals your partner is sending?
- Do you back off if your partner seems hurt or angry?
- If you say or do something that offends, is it easy for you to immediately apologize?

On the other side, if your partner's playful communication hurts your feelings, it doesn't mean you're uptight or that you don't have a sense of humor! Playful communication, especially teasing, can slip into hurtful communication even when the teaser doesn't intend to hurt. If our bodies get hurt while playing, we usually say something, stop playing, and tend to the hurt. The same goes with feelings — if they get hurt, stop and say something so that the healing can begin.

## HANDOUT 2: UU TRIVIA HUNT

Work in teams to find the answers to these questions.  
You may consult any resources you can access in your congregation's building.

Our congregation:

- What is the official name of our congregation?
- Who is the president/chairperson of the congregation?
- When was our congregation founded?
- In what year was our congregation's building constructed?
- Name a room in our building that is named for a famous Unitarian Universalist.
- Who was our congregation's first minister?
- Find a quote from our congregation's first minister.

Our movement:

- What is the first Source of "the living tradition which we share," as listed in the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association?
- What is at 24 Farnsworth Street in Boston?
- What is the name for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations' system of governance, which offers a high degree of autonomy to each congregation?
- What ritual do almost all of our congregations engage in toward the beginning of worship?

Early history:

- What sixteenth-century European heretic, hero to many Unitarian Universalists, was burned at the stake for his beliefs?
- Who defined Unitarianism in his 1819 sermon "Unitarian Christianity," and is sometimes called "the father of American Unitarianism"?
- In what city was the first Universalist church in America?
- In what city was the first Unitarian church in America?
- Who was the first woman minister in the United States to be ordained, achieve full ministerial standing, and be recognized by a religious denomination? Was she Unitarian or Universalist?

- Who wrote *A Treatise on Atonement* in 1805? What was its main point?

More recent history:

- When did the American Unitarian Association merge with the Universalist Church in America?
- The 2004 court decision in the case *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health* legalized same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. How many of the 14 plaintiffs in the case were Unitarian Universalists?
- What is the name of the comprehensive sexuality education program published by the Unitarian Universalist Association and United Church of Christ? Is there a curriculum in this series for adults?



## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — PLAY

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 7, Play.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of play. Participants will recognize the positive impact of playful activities in significant relationships and explore how the process of play can deepen the search for meaning and spiritual development, both individually and as a couple.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice using the following words:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

Who says a free and responsible search for truth and meaning can't be fun? A spirit of playfulness can open new possibilities in our understanding of life, as it opens us to deeper understanding of our partners. Play can create strong connections that sustain couples through difficulties. Play can help us accept our own, our partners', and the universe's foibles. Play can freely and responsibly transform a dull day into a day of laughter, joy, meaning, and truth.

Guided Meditation

Give each participant a container of bubble solution and a bubble wand. Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases. Encourage participants to blow bubbles while you speak, when they are ready to do so.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Take a

deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale, blowing bubbles as you do. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale, enjoying the process of blowing bubbles. Breathe again; this time, as you exhale, notice the form and color of the bubbles. Blow another bubble . . . watch it move . . . float. As the bubbles float away, let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room, float away with the bubbles, as light as air. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling, and connect with your playful self.

[Long pause]

Now, focus on the present . . . focus on this time you have reserved for being together as a couple. It is a gift you are giving to each other. Welcome to this place where you can enjoy being who you are, together. What does play mean to you? Think of yourself playfully interacting with your partner. What are you doing? What do you enjoy most about the experience?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes. Participants should feel free to blow bubbles as they wish.]

Please maintain this spirit during the reading.

Reading

Read "Give Us the Spirit of the Child" by Sara Moores Campbell, 664 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. If you have decided to present it as a responsive reading, give hymnbooks to participants so they can join you.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

## LEADER RESOURCE 2: UU TRIVIA HUNT ANSWER KEY

Our congregation:

- What is the official name of our congregation? (Insert answer.)
- Who is the president/chairperson of the congregation? (Insert answer.)
- When was our congregation founded? (Insert answer.)
- In what year was our congregation's building constructed? (Insert answer.)
- Name a room in our building that is named for a famous Unitarian Universalist. (Insert answer.)
- Who was our congregation's first minister? (Insert answer.)
- Find a quote from our congregation's first minister. (Insert answer.)

Our movement:

- What is the first Source of "the living tradition which we share," as listed in the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association? ("Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life")
- What is at 24 Farnsworth Street in Boston? (The main offices of the Unitarian Universalist Association; [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#); Beacon Press)
- What is the name for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations' system of governance, which offers a high degree of autonomy to each congregation? (Congregational polity)
- What ritual do almost all of our congregations engage in toward the beginning of worship? (Lighting a flaming chalice)

Early history:

- What sixteenth-century European heretic, hero to many Unitarian Universalists, was burned at the stake for his beliefs? (Michael Servetus)
- Who defined Unitarianism in his 1819 sermon "Unitarian Christianity," and is sometimes called

"the father of American Unitarianism"? (William Ellery Channing)

- In what city was the first Universalist church in America? (Gloucester, Massachusetts)
- In what city was the first Unitarian church in America? (Boston and Philadelphia both claim this distinction.)
- Who was the first woman minister in the United States to be ordained, achieve full ministerial standing, and be recognized by a religious denomination? Was she Unitarian or Universalist? (Olympia Brown, Universalist)
- Who wrote *A Treatise on Atonement* in 1805? What was its main point? (Hosea Ballou; the [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/) (at [www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/](http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/)) describes the main point as such: "As finite creatures, he argued, human beings are incapable of offending an infinite God. Therefore, he rejected the orthodox argument that the death of Jesus Christ was designed to appease an angry God, and replaced it with the idea that God is a being of eternal love who seeks the happiness of his human children.")

More recent history:

- When did the American Unitarian Association merge with the Universalist Church of America? (1961)
- The 2004 court decision in the case *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health* legalized same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. How many of the 14 plaintiffs in the case were Unitarian Universalists? (Seven)
- What is the name of the comprehensive sexuality education program published by the Unitarian Universalist Association and United Church of Christ? Is there a curriculum in this series for adults? (*Our Whole Lives*; yes, there is a curriculum for adults and a curriculum for young adults, ages 18 to 35)

## FIND OUT MORE

[Major FUN's Funny Pointless Games Collection](#),  
collected by Bernie DeKoven

[Playing Together for Fun: Creative Play and Lifelong Games](#) (at  
[www.helpguide.org/life/creative\\_play\\_fun\\_games.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/creative_play_fun_games.htm))  
from HelpGuide.org

[Playful Communication Skills: Strengthen and Repair Relationships](#) (at  
[www.helpguide.org/mental/eq7\\_playful\\_communication.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq7_playful_communication.htm)) from HelpGuide.org

[The Art of the Tease](#) by Kathleen McGowan, from  
PsychologyToday.com

## WORKSHOP 8: COLLABORATION

### INTRODUCTION

*Love does not consist of gazing at each other,  
but in looking together in the same direction.*  
— Antoine de Saint Exupery, twentieth-century  
French writer and aviator

Collaboration within a relationship involves each partner actively seeking ways to help the other partner feel fulfilled. Each supports the other's dreams, and both partners work together to help each other grow. Collaboration may enhance problem-solving skills, which can strengthen a couple's relationship. When people collaborate, they strive to achieve a shared vision or goal by working together in an atmosphere of trust, respect, and flexibility.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
Second Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

Although we aspire to the ideal of right relationship, the reality is that as imperfect human beings we struggle with our own not-always-selfless natures. The ability to create just, equal, and compassionate relationships is one of the most important and difficult challenges we face. Conflict, jealousies, and external problems may seem to conspire to undermine our loving relationships. By engaging in respectful interaction, managing conflicts productively, and facing challenges collaboratively, we are better able to sustain mutually loving and beneficial relationships.

#### Considerations for Adaptation

If you are leading Activity 3, Engaging Conflict Collaboratively, in a retreat setting, you may wish to allow couples time to discuss their responses to Handout 1, Styles of Conflict Engagement. Some couples might have a difficult time with this exercise, especially if their styles are at odds with one another. Be prepared to provide support, encouragement, and referrals.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Encourage collaboration between partners
- Affirm that conflict can lead to creative collaboration in a loving relationship

- Present a model for collaborative problem solving

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss the role of collaboration within a relationship
- Analyze the level of collaboration present in a recent conflict situation
- Practice a method for collaborative problem solving
- Identify ways to collaborate on actions for the common good

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: Collaborating to Enhance Your Relationship	30
Activity 3: Engaging Conflict Collaboratively	25
Activity 4: Interest-Based Problem Solving	35
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Collaborating for Change	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Consider the guiding Principle for this session, "Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." Reflect on your most recent successful collaboration with one or more people. You may have collaborated on a project, a trip, a decision — you can even reflect on the collaboration involved in leading *Principled Commitment*. What made this collaboration successful? Was it playful or serious? How did justice, equity, or compassion play into the collaboration?

Consider the three essential collaboration skills outlined in the workshop: the ability to engage in healthy conflict, the ability to juggle divided loyalties, and the ability to solve problems. How do you think you do in each of these skills? Which is the most difficult for you? Why? How might you work on that skill in your personal relationships?

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Collaboration](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Find reading 482, "If Language Makes Us Human," in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Hold it in readiness for the reading.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Collaboration, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on play. Ask whether couples have found ways to increase playfulness in their relationship.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to a one-sentence comment.

Once you feel participants know each other well enough, you may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

## ACTIVITY 2: COLLABORATING TO ENHANCE YOUR RELATIONSHIP (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape
- Newsprint sheet with prepared questions (see Preparation)

## Preparation for Activity

Write the following on a sheet of newsprint, leaving room to add to the list:

### Essential Collaboration Skills

- The ability to engage in healthy conflict
- The ability to juggle divided loyalties
- The ability to solve problems

### Description of Activity

Ask participants to recall the collaborative experience they thought of during the opening guided meditation. Invite volunteers to call out one word or phrase that describes how that experience made them feel. Quickly list the responses on a blank sheet of newsprint. No discussion is necessary. When a variety of words and phrases have been listed, post the sheet on the wall.

Offer these or similar words to focus the activity:

Collaboration within a relationship involves partners actively seeking ways to help each other feel fulfilled. Each supports the other's dreams and works to help the other reach and grow. They pool their resources of knowledge, experience, and skills to more creatively and effectively solve problems. Partners can collaborate most effectively and compassionately when they work together in an atmosphere of trust, respect, and flexibility.

Explain that the activities in this workshop will help couples build collaboration skills in three areas. Post the list of essential collaboration skills that you prepared in advance. Invite participants to name other skills they think facilitate collaboration. Add these skills to the list.

Once participants have generated a list of skills, ask:

- What are some of the benefits you have experienced when you use these skills?
- Has anyone ever had the experience of making a wiser decision through collaboration than you would have on your own? If so, how did that work?
- Has anyone ever had the experience of making a *less* wise decision through collaboration than you would have on your own? If so, what did you learn from that?
- What are ways we can use collaboration to bring out the best wisdom of the couple or group, rather than the lowest point of agreement?

Explain that working well collaboratively can generate excitement as partners work toward a shared vision or goal. It can give both individuals an increased sense of

empowerment, because they feel confident in the support and encouragement of their partner. At the same time, collaboration can create a more interdependent relationship. With collaboration, both partners have the freedom and ability to solve complex problems, to explore possibilities, and to grow.

## ACTIVITY 3: ENGAGING CONFLICT COLLABORATIVELY (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Styles of Conflict Engagement](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.
- Study the handout to familiarize yourself with the grid and the styles of conflict engagement that are shown on it.

### Description of Activity

Share these or similar words of focus for the activity:

Collaboration is seldom conflict-free. In fact, collaboration often depends on conflict, as the collaborators start out with different needs, concerns, and ideas.

In any conflict, both parties make choices about which is more important: the desired outcome of the conflict — in other words, getting what they want — or building the relationship. How they rank these goals guides how they deal with conflict.

Distribute Handout 1, *Styles of Conflict Engagement*. Explain that along the left side of the grid, the importance of the relationship can be ranked low, medium, or high. Across the top of the grid, the importance of the outcome can be ranked low, medium, or high. By looking at where these rankings intersect, we can see how a person might tend to react to conflict. You may wish to review the handout's examples with participants.

Ask for questions and comments about the grid. Point out that sometimes, our approach to conflict doesn't reflect our values. We may not actually believe that the outcome is more important than the relationship, yet behave as if it were. In seeking the outcome we want, we might act in ways that hurt the relationship.

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Invite participants to spend ten minutes reflecting individually about a recent conflict with their partner or someone else whose relationship is important to them. Ask them to consider the questions listed on the handout, writing their responses on separate paper.

After ten minutes, re-gather the large group. Invite comments and questions. Encourage partners to talk with one another at home about what they learned from reflecting on their style of conflict engagement.

## **ACTIVITY 4: INTEREST-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING (35 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Handout 2: [Problem-Solving Chart for Couples](#) (included in this document)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### **Description of Activity**

Use these or similar words to introduce the concept of collaborative problem solving:

Collaborative problem solving is a process of working together to understand the values and interests involved in a problem and weigh various alternatives accordingly. Instead of starting by debating options, couples start by identifying interests.

For example, if one partner wants to send their child Chris to day camp, and the other partner wants Chris to stay at home, the partners would first write down their interests. These might include "saving money," "spending time with Chris," and "developing Chris's social skills." They would then evaluate each option based on those interests and look for creative ways to satisfy the most interests.

Collaborative problem solving depends on effective communication and cooperation. It engages creativity and can help partners break through disagreements when they feel "stuck."

Distribute and review Handout 2, Problem-Solving Chart for Couples. Explain that it provides an example of how a couple might engage in collaborative problem solving. The couple in the example is trying to figure out what to do with a week off. Emphasize that both partners have unique sets of priorities that may involve friends, parents, children, organizations, work, physical needs, hobbies, or other interests.

Explain that collaborative problem solving involves reaching agreement on the interests involved, expanding the options, and then finding creative ways to satisfy as many interests for each person as possible.

Ask participants to pair up with their partners. Offer the following instructions:

You are invited now to think of a choice or dilemma you're facing as a couple. It doesn't have to be something profound. In fact, it's better for the purpose of this exercise if you choose a simple situation around which you don't have a lot of passion or conflict.

Practice using this chart, first by brainstorming interests, then by listing up to four options. When you've listed your options and interests, together you will evaluate how well each option satisfies each interest. For the ratings, you can use high/medium/low, plus/minus/neutral, a scale of 1 to 10, or any rating that makes sense to you. If you want to create totals for the various columns, you can, but it's not necessary.

Allow 15 minutes for partners to collaborate on the chart. Then draw the large group back together for discussion. Ask:

- What are some of the interests you named?
- Did you find that differences in your interests influenced which options you each preferred? If so, how?
- Did analyzing a problem in terms of interests help you clarify the situation? Do you think this method can help you reach more agreeable solutions together? Why or why not?
- How easy or difficult was it to find creative ways to satisfy as many interests as possible for each person?
- What did you learn from going through this process together?

## **CLOSING (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.



## Description of Activity

Summarize the workshop and its focus on collaboration. Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas or skills discussed in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about collaboration or this workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- Did we as leaders model good collaboration skills?
- How can we best respond to differences of opinion within the group?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying

handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

Affection Connection — Collaboration

Extend your exploration of collaboration by trying one or more of these activities on your own.

For Couples: Conflict Engagement Styles

Take home Handout 1, Styles of Conflict Engagement, which you worked on individually in the workshop. Discuss it together, sharing what you learned by reflecting on a recent conflict. Identify ideas for resolving conflict in a manner that's consistent with your value of the relationship and the outcome.

For Couples: Solving Problems Collaboratively

Take home Handout 2, Problem-Solving Chart for Couples. Try using the chart to tackle another problem, perhaps one more significant than the one you explored together during the workshop. Discuss whether you would like to use charts like this in the future to help you work through problems collaboratively.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

Many Unitarian Universalists find great spiritual and emotional satisfaction in using their individual strengths to help solve problems and respond to needs outside of their personal relationships. They may get involved in social justice work, donate time or funds to charitable organizations, become active in politics — the options are nearly endless.

Invite couples to join in a small group with another couple or two. Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Ask groups to create a list of current ways that people in the group work *individually* for social change.



After 5 minutes, ask the same groups to spend 5 minutes generating a list of how they work for social change as *couples*.

Some groups will have many examples and others will have few. Clarify that this is okay — some people have more time and resources for social action, and some people are activists by identity. Many people don't have such resources or such an identity, but do have an interest in doing whatever small things they can to create a better world.

When they have completed their lists, ask groups to discuss the impact of working collaboratively "for the cause" and for the relationship. Allow 3 to 5 minutes.

In the time remaining, invite participants to pair up with their partners and discuss which causes might benefit most from their combined interests and skills. Ask them to take some time during the coming week to consider which cause they would most like to work on together and what changes they might need to make in their own lifestyle or schedules to make this happen.

## HANDOUT 1: STYLES OF CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT

	Importance of Outcome		
Importance of Relationship	High	Med.	Low
High	Collaborate		Accommodate
Med.		Compromise	
Low	Compete		Avoid

The grid above displays five styles of conflict engagement. Each style's placement reflects its emphasis on relationship and outcome. Along the left side of the grid, the importance of the relationship between the conflicting parties can be ranked low, medium, or high. Across the top of the grid, the importance of the conflict's outcome can be ranked low, medium, or high. Each combination of the two rankings represents a different style of conflict engagement. For example:

- Someone who feels that building the relationship is of high importance, and that getting the desired outcome of the conflict is of low importance, may be more likely to accommodate a partner's wishes.
- Someone who feels that the outcome is of high importance and the relationship is of low importance may compete by demanding that things be done his/her way.
- Someone who feels that both the relationship and the outcome are of low importance may simply avoid trying to resolve the conflict.
- When someone feels that the outcome and the relationship are equally important, the best options are to compromise or to work collaboratively to achieve a result both partners find satisfying.

Think of a recent conflict you had with your partner, a child, or someone else with whom you have a relationship that is important to you. Looking back on the situation, consider the following questions:

- Would you say that your primary approach was accommodation, avoidance, compromise, collaboration, or competition?
- Did this approach reflect the value you would assign to the importance of the outcome and the importance of the relationship? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What might you have done differently to resolve the conflict while supporting your partner or enhancing your relationship?
- What have you found to be the most effective way to handle conflict with your partner?
- How has constructive conflict resolution enhanced your relationship?

## HANDOUT 2: PROBLEM-SOLVING CHART FOR COUPLES

Below is a sample problem-solving chart. A couple used this chart to help solve their problem of what to do during an upcoming week off. First they came up with a list of interests that each of them would like to see reflected in their time off. They listed these interests down the left side of the chart. Then they identified three options and listed them across the top. Finally, they filled in the chart to evaluate how well each option would satisfy each interest.

	Options		
Interests	Work on home repair & garden	Go to country inn together	Go on canoe trip with kids & Lee family
Fun	Low	Medium	High
Intimacy	Low	High	Medium
Saving money	High	Low	Medium
Time with friends	Low	Low	High
Time with family	Medium	Low	High
Romance	Low	High	Low
Relaxation	Low	High	Medium

Charts can also include indications of how much each interest matters to each partner. For example, "time with friends" might be something that one partner wants while the other doesn't.

Here you can create your own chart.

Problem to be solved: \_\_\_\_\_

	Options			
Interests				

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — COLLABORATION

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 8, Collaboration.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of collaboration. Participants will explore collaboration as a process of actively seeking ways to help each other live life to its fullest by solving problems together and supporting each other's dreams.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater connection among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

As imperfect human beings, we struggle with our own not-always-selfless natures. The ability to create just, equitable, and compassionate relationships is one of the most important and difficult challenges we face. Collaboration is a skill — an art — that is essential to

just and equitable relationships. When we collaborate, we can best address the conflict, insecurities, and challenges that all loving relationships face. We are thus better able to sustain mutually loving and beneficial relationships.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place of connection. Envision yourself collaborating with your partner. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit during the reading.

Reading

Read "If Language Makes Us Human" by Jacob Trapp, 482 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

# WORKSHOP 9: COMMITMENT

## INTRODUCTION

*Loving involves commitment. We are not automatic lovers of self, others, world, or God. Love does not just happen. . . . Love is a choice — not simply, or necessarily, a rational choice, but rather a willingness to be present to others without pretense or guile.*  
— Rev. Carter Heyward, contemporary Episcopal priest and feminist theologian

Commitments give structure to life, imbuing life with meaning and higher purpose. Sincere commitments can be a source for growth and liberation, both relationally and religiously. Couples participating in *Principled Commitment* have all made some form of commitment as spouses or partners. This workshop invites couples to consider their commitments — to their relationship and to their values — in the contexts of work, family, and community.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle  
Sixth Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

Our loving relationships are intimately connected with what happens in the greater world. Relationships can teach us to value — or devalue — community, justice, liberty, and peace. When we enact love and justice in our relationships, we are better equipped to enact them in the wider world. The commitments couples make with one another can fuel commitments to live their values socially and politically. By taking charge of personal behaviors, by committing to principles, by learning to cope with difficulties and change in a constructive manner, by living a life of generosity and good intention through loving and compassionate relationships, we help ensure that a similarly positive world becomes a more realistic vision.

### Considerations for Adaptation

Alternate activities present other ways to explore commitment. Alternate Activity 1, Faith in Action, highlights commitment to the congregation. (It works best directly following Activity 2, Signs of Commitment.) Alternate Activity 2, A Model for Managing Change, explores one of commitment's biggest challenges. Alternate Activity 3, Filling Your Bucket, helps participants reflect on the various commitments in their

lives: commitments to self, partner, children, and the greater world. To accommodate alternate activities, Activity 3, Growing Together, can be shortened or the workshop can be extended.

## GOALS

This workshop will:

- Highlight commitment, personal growth, and change, three factors that are often interrelated in relationships

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss the relationship of love and commitment
- Identify relationship skills that are nurtured by partners' mutual commitment
- Identify events and periods of their relationship in which they experienced personal growth, individually and as a couple

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: Signs of Commitment	30
Activity 3: Growing Together	60
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Commitment to the Congregation	15
Alternative Activity 2: A Model for Managing Change	20
Alternate Activity 3: Filling Your Bucket	15

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carter Heyward, in the passage included as Leader Resource 2 for this workshop, writes that "love is the choice to experience life as a member of the human family, a partner in the dance of life." Set aside some time for personal reflection and meditation on the subject of commitment. In what ways do you choose and

commit yourself to love — not just in big life decisions, like adopting a child or speaking wedding vows, but also in the smaller things you do in the everyday? What are your strongest commitments in life — those to which you devote the most time, treasure, and talent? Consider the guiding Principle for this workshop, "The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." How do your commitments align with this goal? You may wish to say a prayer or meditate on those people you love, those things you are committed to, and your hopes for the world.

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a schedule of upcoming workshops, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (at least one copy)
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Commitment](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Find reading 672 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Hold it in readiness for the reading.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Commitment, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on collaboration. Ask whether couples have tried some new ways of collaborating.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to a one-sentence comment.

Once you feel participants know each other well enough, you may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

## ACTIVITY 2: SIGNS OF COMMITMENT (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape
- Leader Resource 2: [Loving Involves Commitment](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint sheet with list of skills (see Preparation)

## Preparation for Activity

- List the following skills on a sheet of newsprint, leaving space to add more items:
  - Growing together (evolving possibilities)
  - Focusing on self-responsibility and responsibility to each other
  - Moving beyond obstacles
  - Valuing each other (not taking each other for granted)
  - Managing changes (expected and unexpected)
  - Inspiring positive behaviors
- Review the passage in Leader Resource 2, Loving Involves Commitment, and be prepared to read it aloud to the group.

## Description of Activity

Ask participants to recall how they felt during the workshop opening's guided meditation, when they imagined themselves expressing their commitment to their partner. Invite volunteers to call out one word or phrase that describes how that experience made them feel. Quickly list the responses on a sheet of newsprint. No discussion is necessary. When a variety of words and phrases have been listed, post the sheet on the wall.

Share the reading "Loving Involves Commitment" by Carter Heyward (Leader Resource 2).

Invite participants to respond to the reading. Ask:

- Does the phrase "love is a choice" resonate with your experience of love?
- How are our personal love relationships related to commitments we make for justice in the world?
- Is commitment to a cause different in its essence or importance from commitment to a loving partner? If so, how?
- Do you have other ways of understanding love and commitment? If so, what are they?

Explain that in long-term relationships, commitment can be seen as a "founding value" because it helps both partners feel safe and supported. Ask:

- For what reasons has commitment between partners been important to you?

After participants have generated their ideas, display the list you prepared ahead of time:

- Growing together (evolving possibilities)
- Focusing on self-responsibility and responsibility to each other
- Moving beyond obstacles
- Valuing each other (not taking each other for granted)
- Managing changes (expected and unexpected)
- Inspiring positive behaviors

Explain that these six skills can be nurtured through partners' mutual commitment. If similar ideas have already been identified by participants, point out correlations. Invite participants to add other skills to the list.

## ACTIVITY 3: GROWING TOGETHER (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Roll of narrow poster paper or large sheets of newsprint 2 to 3 feet of paper per couple)
- Pens, pencils, or fine-point markers
- Tables
- Optional: Yardsticks, rulers, or other straightedge tools

### Preparation for Activity

- If you are using a roll of paper, cut it into appropriate lengths.
- To save time, you may wish to draw three long, straight lines (parallel to the long edge) on each sheet of paper. This will eliminate the need for participants to use straightedge tools during the activity.
- Arrange the room — or arrange for a room — so that participants can work at tables.

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

We will now focus on one of the skills that commitment can nurture: growing together.

It is natural for humans to grow. Interpersonal growth occurs for people at different rates and at different times. Some people grow so slowly they appear unchanging, while others' personalities seem to change overnight.

When couples enter a relationship, they may be at similar points on their evolutionary journey. But sometimes one partner grows when the other doesn't. Or they may both grow, but in different directions.



Growth itself can put stress on a relationship. So can attempts to stifle growth. How can we be supportive of our own and our partners' growth, and continue to nurture our commitment to one another?

Ask participants to pair off with their partners at the tables. Distribute the newsprint or drawing paper; straightedge tools (if needed); and pens, pencils, or markers. Tell participants:

You will work together to create three timelines of your relationship: one for each of you as individuals and one for the two of you as a couple. Each line starts on the day your relationship began and ends with the present. On the lines, you will mark events and periods of personal growth: times when one or the other of you grew as an individual and times when you grew as a couple. You will have 15 minutes to draw your timelines.

After 15 minutes, or when you notice that couples have finished constructing their timelines, invite them to remain in their pairs and discuss their timelines with each other. Ask them to identify high-growth events or periods on each line and consider:

- What accounted for the growth at that time?
- Was it a pleasant time, an unpleasant time, or both?
- During that time, how did I support my partner (or how did my partner support me)?
- What did we learn from that time that we want to carry forward?

After 30 minutes of discussion, draw the group back together to process the activity. Ask:

- What is scary about personal growth in a relationship? What is joyful about it?
- Are there limits to what amount or type of growth a partner might reasonably support? In such situations, what are partner's options?
- What kinds of attitudes and outlooks can assist us in supporting our partner's personal growth?

## **CLOSING (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which "Affection Connection" options you will encourage participants to do.

- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

### **Description of Activity**

Summarize the workshop, emphasizing the connection between growth, change, and commitment: that growth and change can be some of the biggest challenges to commitment. Ask participants whether they have any questions about the ideas discussed in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about commitment or this workshop.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for future sessions. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Was it difficult for some participants to talk about commitment and change? If so, how might we have helped them feel more comfortable?
- How can we best respond to differences of opinion within the group?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?

- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

Affection Connection — Commitment

Extend your exploration of commitment by trying one or more of these activities on your own.

For Couples: Managing Change

With your partner, try applying the model explored in Alternate Activity 2, A Model for Managing Change, to one or more situations involving your relationship.

[Leaders: if you choose this option, include Leader Resource 3, A Model for Managing Change, as part of the Taking It Home materials.]

For Individuals: Reflecting on Commitment

Take some time to journal about the commitments you have made to yourself, your partner, your children (if applicable), and the greater world. What commitments — stated and unstated — have you made to each? Are there more or fewer commitments than you expected? Which commitments are most core to your identity? Which commitments are made more from necessity than desire? Which commitments do you most want to affirm, and how will you affirm them in the days to come?

For Couples with Children: Changes in the Family

Discuss "change" as a family. What has changed in your household recently? How did everyone respond? Try applying the model explored in Alternate Activity 2, A Model for Managing Change, to the situation.

[Leaders: If you choose this option, include Leader Resource 3, A Model for Managing Change, as part of the Taking It Home materials.]

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — COMMITMENT TO THE CONGREGATION (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- The newsprint list of skills from Activity 2: Signs of Commitment
- Easel

### Description of Activity

This activity can follow directly from Activity 2, Signs of Commitment.

Introduce the discussion with these or similar words:

Being a member of a congregation involves a big commitment. You commit to sharing in the mission and the vision of the congregation — to personal growth, stewardship, service, and shared ministry. You may be asked to share your time, talent, and treasure often. In return, you are part of a large support system that ministers to you, celebrates the positive occasions in your life, and comforts you in particularly hard times.

Take a few moments to think about your personal commitment to the congregation: ways that you are committed to give, receive, and participate in the mission and vision of this congregation. Perhaps you are an active member of the congregation; perhaps you're brand new and don't know if you're committed. Whatever your level of commitment is, we honor that.

While participants are reflecting, re-post the bulleted list of skills from Activity 2, Signs of Commitment. Ask participants to review that list. Invite discussion by asking:

- What skills from this list are nurtured due to your commitment to the congregation?
- How does your commitment to the congregation relate to the other commitments in your life?

Ask participants to consider acting upon these thoughts by becoming involved in the congregation in ways that express their commitments.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: A MODEL FOR MANAGING CHANGE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3: [A Model for Managing Change](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint sheet with list of steps (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- On a sheet of newsprint, list these four steps:
  - Understand what has happened
  - Accept what can't be changed
  - Put the past behind you
  - Re-commit to the relationship

- Study Leader Resource 3, A Model for Managing Change, so that you can present it effectively.

### Description of Activity

Present the material from Leader Resource 3, A Model for Managing Change, in a lively and engaging manner. Use the newsprint sheet to refer to the steps in the process. You may wish to intersperse these questions at appropriate times throughout your presentation to further engage participants:

- What are some changes that you, as a couple, have weathered or that you anticipate?
- What's the hardest part about each step? What resources can help you accomplish it?
- What has been helpful for you in managing difficult changes as a couple?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: FILLING YOUR BUCKET (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Filling Your Bucket](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing
- Optional: Self-adhesive colored dots (at least 50 per participant)

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 1, Filling Your Bucket, and self-adhesive colored dots. Explain:

The buckets on the handout represent commitments made to oneself, to one's partner, to one's children (if any), and to the greater world. These commitments can

range from major ones such as "to love, honor, and cherish," to smaller ones such as "eat organic foods." Here are some examples:

My Personal Bucket (things I do for myself): Exercise, read for pleasure, get enough sleep

My Partner Bucket (things I do for my partner): Listen to his/her feelings, do the dishes, be faithful physically and emotionally

My Child Bucket (things I do for my children, if any): Provide food and shelter, nurture their education

My Greater World Bucket (things I do for the community or world): Do social justice work, vote, use fuel-efficient vehicles

Ask participants to write words and short phrases in the appropriate buckets to represent the different types of commitments they have made. Or, if you are using colored dots, participants will write the words or phrases on the dots and place them on the buckets.

Once the majority of the participants are done writing or placing their dots, invite participants to objectively examine the chart they have created for themselves.

Ask:

- Do you have a relatively equal balance of commitments, or does one bucket significantly outweigh others?
- Were you surprised to see how many commitments you have actually made?

Explain:

Ideally, we would achieve a rough balance between the types of commitments we make. If we promise ourselves too little, we risk feeling neglected. If we focus too much on a partner's happiness and neglect our own, we may eventually feel cheated.

Ask participants to reflect on any patterns they observe in their bucket charts. If they are missing a sense of balance, encourage them to carefully monitor their time and values to see if change is necessary.

## HANDOUT 1: FILLING YOUR BUCKET PAGE 1

My Personal Bucket



## HANDOUT 1 PAGE 2

My Partner Bucket





## HANDOUT 1 PAGE 3

My Child Bucket



## HANDOUT 1 PAGE 4

My Greater World Bucket



## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — COMMITMENT

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 9, Commitment.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principle

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of commitment. Participants will explore different forms of commitment and learn skills to help them protect and enhance their commitment to each other.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop:

We covenant to affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Our loving relationships are intimately connected with what happens in the greater world. Relationships can teach us to value — or devalue — community, justice, liberty, and peace. When we enact love and justice in our relationships, we are better equipped to enact them in the wider world. The commitments couples make with one another can fuel commitments to live their values socially and politically. By taking charge of personal behaviors, by committing to principles, by learning to cope with difficulties and change in a constructive manner, by living a life of generosity and good intention through loving and compassionate relationships, we help ensure that a similarly positive world becomes a more realistic vision.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place of connection. Envision yourself expressing your commitment to your partner. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit during the reading.

Reading

Read words by Judith Meyer, 672 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Sit in silence for a few moments before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.



## LEADER RESOURCE 2: LOVING INVOLVES COMMITMENT

*Offer these words on love from the Reverend Carter Heyward, a feminist and lesbian woman who was among the first women ordained as an Episcopal priest.*

Love, like truth and beauty, is concrete. Love is not fundamentally a sweet feeling; not, at heart, a matter of sentiment, attachment, or being "drawn toward." Love is active, effective, a matter of making reciprocal and mutually beneficial relation with one's friends and enemies. Love creates righteousness, or justice, here on earth. To make love is to make justice. As advocates and activists for justice know, loving involves struggle, resistance, and risk. People working today on behalf of women, blacks, lesbians and gay men, the aging, the poor in this country and elsewhere know that making justice is not a warm, fuzzy experience. I think also that sexual lovers and good friends know that the most compelling relationships demand hard work, patience, and a willingness to endure tensions and anxiety in creating mutually empowering bonds.

For this reason, loving involves commitment. We are not automatic lovers of self, others, world, or God. Love does not just happen. We are not love machines, puppets on the strings of a deity called "love." Love is a choice — not simply, or necessarily, a rational choice, but rather a willingness to be present to others without pretense or guile. Love is a conversion to humanity — a willingness to participate with others in the healing of a broken world and broken lives. Love is the choice to experience life as a member of the human family, a partner in the dance of life, rather than as an alien in the world or as a deity above the world, aloof and apart from human flesh.

## LEADER RESOURCE 3: A MODEL FOR MANAGING CHANGE

One of the most challenging aspects of a committed relationship is the need to manage change, whether that change is perceived as positive, negative, or neutral. In a simple sense, change means that things are no longer and may never again be the same. It disrupts existing activities and feelings, and it may require learning new ways of doing things. Managing change often means letting go of illusions, accepting a new reality, and focusing on new possibilities. Change may require working out new agreements and finding tools to move forward.

Change is inevitable, and its impact can range from devastating to thrilling. When a significant life event occurs, a couple can manage the change and enrich their relationship, or they can choose not to manage it, thereby decreasing their odds of attaining satisfaction.

Change of any kind usually requires some sacrifice and the experience of loss, even if it is simply a matter of giving up something familiar. Not everyone is comfortable with change. Those who aren't may offer resistance temporarily or for a prolonged and potentially disruptive period.

One way of getting more comfortable with change is to learn to respond to it in four phases:

- Understand what has happened
- Accept what can't be changed
- Put the past behind you
- Recommit to the relationship

### Understand What Has Happened

The first step involves describing the event and identifying how you feel about it. What occurred, and what was its significance? Does it create new demands on you, your partner, or your relationship?

Events can be unexpected or anticipated; positive, negative, or neutral. Unexpected events may include

sudden death, job loss, or a disabling illness. Anticipated events may include getting married, getting a promotion, buying a car, or becoming a parent. Soon after these events occur, the demands they create become evident. These demands include learning new skills, finding support, or letting go of old beliefs or behaviors.

Identifying how you feel requires the ability to label your inner experience in relation to what's happening. Most events that create a demand for change bring about strong feelings. A death in the family can call forth uncontrollable feelings of grief, while a change in work responsibilities might bring out feelings of excitement, fear, or both.

### Accept What Can't Be Changed

Many life events are outside of our control: the process of aging and dying; the inevitable demands of life transitions; the coming of disease, disruptions, and disasters. Events can challenge people's assumptions about the world and themselves. By their very nature, life-changing events mean that things cannot continue the way they were. Responding to such changes in a healthy manner requires accepting the actuality of the event and its meaning before moving on.

### Put the Past Behind You

Putting the past behind you involves accepting it without being trapped by it. Accepting means more than letting the event sink in emotionally; it means letting go. Putting the past behind you takes time and often includes a recycling of the acceptance and understanding processes.

### Recommit to the Relationship

Understanding without action is rarely productive. Beginning again means acting on the desire to make something happen. Taking action decreases the odds that you will go through the rest of your life anchored in the past. It increases your chances of creating a new vision of what's possible for you as an individual and as part of a couple. It is an expression of your commitment to your future and to your relationship.

## WORKSHOP 10: LOVE

### INTRODUCTION

*Love is an action, never simply a feeling.  
— bell hooks (sic), contemporary author,  
professor, and activist*

Quote from hooks's book *All About Love*. Her name is properly spelled in all lowercase.

Love is the essence of our most meaningful relationships. It is the glue that maintains a couple's connection. Love is nourishment of our soul, and love is the compassion we take with us as we live our lives on a daily basis.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principles  
All Seven Principles

The transformative power of love underpins every Unitarian Universalist Principle. It is also the foundation for a healthy individual, a healthy couple, and a healthy community. Love can be seen as the source of meaning and as the expression of faith in human relationships. The Greeks identified three types of love: Eros, the passionate love between lovers; Philos, the love among close friends; and Agape, the love for the greater society or greater good. The manifestation of all three forms of love can help a healthy relationship grow. Remembering how to love, and acknowledging the need to give and to receive love, is the basis for all affirmative human relationships. Love can transform a hurting world.

Considerations for Adaptation

If you are leading this workshop as part of a retreat, or if your group appreciates hands-on crafts, consider making time for Alternate Activity 2, Personal Mini-Altars. This activity dovetails nicely with the couple altar-building option in Workshop 11.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Affirm the importance of verbal and nonverbal expressions of love
- Present a psychological model describing the components of love
- Help participants recognize the role of vulnerability in love

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify ways to say "I love you" without words
- Apply a psychological model of love to their own relationships
- Propose ways to maintain or increase passion, intimacy, or commitment in their relationships
- Identify personal vulnerabilities that the intimacy of a relationship can address

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	10
Activity 2: How Do I Know I Am Loved?	20
Activity 3: The Many Facets of Love	35
Activity 4: Tender Points	30
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: Faith in Action — Articulating Our UU Faith	25
Alternate Activity 2: Personal Mini-Altars	45

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take some time to complete and reflect upon Activity 4, Tender Points, on your own. If you are going to lead Alternate Activity 2, Personal Mini-Altars, consider creating your own personal altar to use as an example in the workshop.

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Copies of workshop series schedule

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, post the newsprint agenda or set up and test the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.
- If you have a workshop schedule, place copies of it at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Love](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Love, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on commitment. Ask:

- Since the last workshop, have you changed anything about how you relate as a couple?
- Share something that moved your heart during the past week.

If desired, you can move this activity along briskly by asking participants to limit themselves to a one-sentence comment.

You may wish to offer an alternative check-in that is more meaningful to the group.

## ACTIVITY 2: HOW DO I KNOW I AM LOVED? (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Low-stick masking tape
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell or chime

- Copies of Handout 1: [Saying "I Love You" Without the Usual Words](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)

### Description of Activity

Ask participants to recall how they felt during the workshop opening's guided meditation, when they imagined themselves expressing love to their partner. Invite volunteers to call out one word or phrase that describes how that experience made them feel. Quickly list the responses on newsprint. There is no need for discussion. When a variety of responses have been listed, post the sheet on the wall.

Invite participants to pair up with someone other than their partner.

Offer these instructions:

I will give you a statement to discuss in your pairs. One of you will share your thoughts about this statement for two minutes while the other listens. Then you will switch speaking and listening roles.

After both of you have had a turn, I will invite each pair to share two of their ideas with the group. This is brainstorming, so all ideas are acceptable, and no discussion is needed. Ideas will be recorded on newsprint as they are spoken.

Once the group understands the instructions, write this statement on newsprint:

- I know I am loved when my partner \_\_\_\_\_.

Invite participants to begin sharing their ideas. Clarify that heavy-duty answers are not needed. Rather, this is an opportunity to express the small, simple, daily things that let people know they are special in the eyes of one who loves them.

After two minutes, ring the bell or chime and invite participants to switch roles.

When four minutes are up, ask each pair to share two of the ways they filled in the blank. Record these ideas on newsprint. When finished, post the sheet on the wall.

Repeat the process with the next statement:

- I feel I am showing my love for my partner when I \_\_\_\_\_.

After ideas have been shared and posted on the wall, summarize the responses to both statements. Lead the group in discussion by asking:

- Do you notice any particular trends in what was said? If so, what do you conclude from that?

- What are some other ways we can say "I love you" beyond saying the words?

Emphasize that what often helps fertilize the ground for the growth of a loving relationship is simple kindness and thoughtfulness.

Distribute Handout 1, [Saying "I Love You" Without the Usual Words](#). Explain that it offers a few other ideas about how partners may show their appreciation to each other. If there is time, review the handout with participants and encourage them to add their favorite ideas from this exercise to the list.

## ACTIVITY 3: THE MANY FACETS OF LOVE (35 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint sheet with triangle diagram (see Preparation)
- Newsprint sheet with list of questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Copies of Handout 2: [The Triangular Theory of Love](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)

### Preparation for Activity

- Study Handout 2, [The Triangular Theory of Love](#), to familiarize yourself with its concepts.
- On a sheet of newsprint, draw the simple triangle diagram as shown in Handout 2, [The Triangular Theory of Love](#).
- On another sheet of newsprint, write the following questions:
  - What shape of triangle would represent your present relationship with your partner?
  - What shape would represent your relationship when it began?
  - Would you like to increase or maintain the passion, intimacy, or commitment you offer the relationship? If so, write down some ways you would like to do that.

### Description of Activity

Focus the activity with these or similar words:

The ancient Greeks identified three types of love: Eros, the passionate love between lovers; Philos, the love among close friends; and Agape, the love for the greater

society or greater good. The manifestation of all three forms of love can help a healthy relationship grow.

Remembering how to love, and acknowledging the need to give and to receive love, is the basis for all affirming human relationships. Love can transform a hurting world.

Often, when we think of being in a relationship, we think of only the romantic form of love. But truly healthy relationships exhibit all kinds of love — love for oneself, for children and family, for dear friends, romantic love and intimacy, and compassion for the greater world's needs.

Invite participants to reflect on the connections between love for self, partner, and others. Ask:

- How does love for self relate to love for a partner? Love for children? Family? Friends? The greater world?
- Taking all of these types of love into account, how would you define "love"?

Display the newsprint sheet on which you drew the triangle diagram. Explain the triangle theory using these or similar words:

Contemporary psychologists have tried to define love, and it's difficult to do — there are many kinds of love and many expressions. A psychologist named Robert Sternberg created a model for understanding love: a "triangular theory."

This theory conceives of love as having three components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. They are represented by the three points of a triangle. Intimacy refers to feelings of close connection and bonding. Passion refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual desire. Decision/commitment is about deciding to love someone and then committing to maintain that relationship.

In this diagram, the sides of the triangle are equal. But in our relationships, the three components of love are not always equal in strength. For example, love may be high in passion and intimacy but low on commitment. Or a relationship might be held together primarily by commitment and intimacy, while passion is low.

We can draw triangles of different shapes to represent relationships with different levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment. If intimacy is high, then the distance from the center to that point of the triangle is long. If passion is low, then the distance from the center to that point of the triangle is short.

In this model, the triangles can change shape over time, even in the same relationship. For example, in the beginning a relationship might be high in passion, low in intimacy, and low in commitment. Five years later, it might be high in commitment, high in intimacy, and low in passion. Ten years down the road, it might be high in commitment and passion but low in intimacy.

Couples often strive for "consummate love" — love that is high in all three areas. Consummate love is achieved from time to time, but it is hard to maintain. Stresses can decrease our passion. Overwhelming demands can decrease our intimacy. Events may cause us to think about the reasons for our commitment. Thus love, while constant, can change shape throughout a relationship.

Distribute Handout 2, The Triangular Theory of Love. Allow a few minutes for participants to review the triangles and descriptions of the components.

Display the newsprint sheet with the list of questions you prepared ahead of time. Invite participants to reflect individually on the shapes of their own relationship's triangle over time and on ways to increase or maintain the passion, intimacy, or commitment they offer the relationship.

After allowing about five minutes for reflection, re-gather participants. Ask:

- What was it like to think about love in this way?
- Would anyone like to share how the shape of your triangle has changed over time?

## ACTIVITY 4: TENDER POINTS (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 3: [Tender Points](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Leader Resource 2: [Tender Points Guidelines](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint sheet with circle diagram (see Preparation)
- Newsprint sheet with list of guidelines (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing

- Self-adhesive dots in at least three colors (at least one sheet of each color per participant)

### Preparation for Activity

- Using Handout 3, Tender Points, as a guide, draw three concentric circles on a newsprint sheet.
- On a separate newsprint sheet, write the Tender Points Guidelines from Leader Resource 2.
- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### Description of Activity

This exercise will help couples know, understand, and respect their partners' innermost dynamics and passions.

Share the following story from *Walking on Water* by Madeleine L'Engle:

There is a story of an elderly Hasidic rabbi, renowned for his piety. He was unexpectedly confronted one day by one of his devoted, youthful disciples. In a burst of feeling, the young disciple exclaimed, "My master, I love you." The ancient teacher looked up from his books and asked his fervent disciple, "Do you know what hurts me, my son?" The young man was puzzled. Composing himself, he stuttered, "I don't understand your question, Rabbi. I am trying to tell you how much you mean to me, and you confuse me with irrelevant questions." "My question was neither confusing nor irrelevant," rejoined the rabbi, "for if you do not know what hurts me, how can you truly love me?"

Distribute Handout 3, Tender Points, which has three concentric circles on it. Pass out self-adhesive dots, one sheet of each color for each participant. Have extra dots on hand.

Provide this background information to help participants understand the activity:

We all have tender points — issues that are sensitive or important to us and that stem from our innermost identities. Loving relationships include an understanding and knowledge of these points.

These tender points often come from our passion or fears. They may also reflect ethical expectations, pet peeves, or past hurts. They make us vulnerable, because these are the spots where we can be most easily hurt.

Yet these tender points can also be a connection to a deep and loving relationship. How a partner responds to these tender points can influence the degree of emotional connection and trust between two people. Partners need to know where to tread lightly, when to

support, when to protect, and most importantly, how to hold a loved one's innermost feelings sacred.

In this activity, you will map your own tender points by identifying what is most vital, most sensitive, and most important to you.

Display the newsprint diagram of concentric circles. Label the outer circle "Living in the world." Offer this explanation:

When it comes to living in this world, what are your sensitive points? Where do you frequently get hurt, or fear getting hurt? What passion do you have that would cause hurt to you if it were not respected? Perhaps it is extended family, a time-consuming hobby, or focus on career or work. Perhaps it is a fear or a commitment. What are your tender points when living in the world?

Choose one color of dot for your "world" circle. Take a dot of the color, label it with a word describing one of your worldly tender points, and place it in the outer circle of your handout. Repeat with as many dots as needed, in the same color.

Allow a few minutes for participants to complete this task.

Next, label the middle circle "Living in loving relationship." Offer the following explanation:

Each person has tender points when it comes to loving another. What are the tender points within your human relationships? Where are the places you can most easily be hurt? What is most important to you as you live day to day in a loving relationship? Examples might include use of time, kids, parents, partner's lifestyle, cooperation or competition, money, sex, and housework. What is important? What is sacred to you?

Choose a dot of a different color, label it with one of your relationship tender points, and place it in the middle circle of your handout. Repeat with as many dots as needed, in the same color.

Allow a few minutes for participants to complete this task.

Next, label the center circle "Self." Offer the following explanation:

Each of us has many personal tender points that shape and motivate us. What would you list as your personal tender points — the places where you need to learn to be gentle with yourself? Some examples might include insecurities, fears, dreams, needs, spiritual life, or whatever else is important to the makeup of your being. What does your partner need to know about you as an individual to truly understand who you are?

Using a third color, label a dot with one of your personal tender points and place it in the inner circle on your handout. Repeat with as many dots as needed, in the same color.

After allowing them a few minutes to complete this task, invite participants to pair up with their partners and share the most tender points they have identified. Allow up to ten minutes for sharing. If time runs out, either remind everyone that this conversation can be continued at home or simply allow for more conversation.

When the group finishes, display the newsprint sheet on which you wrote the guidelines from Leader Resource 2. Invite participants to read the points in unison. If time remains, invite comments and questions.

## **CLOSING (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of customized Taking It Home handout (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop. Download it to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

### **Description of Activity**

Summarize the workshop and its focus on love. Ask whether any participants have questions or comments about the workshop's theme or discussions.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Explain that this workshop's "Affection Connection" activity is particularly important — it will help couples write their covenants for the final workshop. Remind couples to bring their covenants to the next session. Emphasize that they will be sharing their covenants with the other participants.

You may want to take a few minutes to discuss the form of the next workshop's celebration, which can range from sharing a simple snack to a potluck dinner at someone's home. Participants may be invited to plan the celebration among themselves, using the contact sheet provided at the start of the program.

Gather participants around the chalice. Invite each person to offer one thought or insight about love or this workshop.

If you wish, read the following words by Mother Theresa:

Love cannot remain by itself — it has no meaning.  
Love has to be put into action,  
and that action is service.  
Whatever form we are,

able or disabled, rich or poor,  
it is not how much we do,  
but how much love we put in the doing,  
a lifelong sharing of love with others.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

With your co-leader, take some time after the workshop to evaluate the session and plan for the final session. Consider these questions:

- What parts of the workshop seemed to engage the most people? Why?
- When did we seem particularly effective as co-leaders? Why?
- How might we use similar techniques in future workshops?
- What were the most challenging aspects of leading this workshop?
- What can be done to address those challenges in future workshops?
- Did the participants seem to feel comfortable enough to talk about love? If not, how might we have helped them feel more comfortable?
- How can we best respond to differences of opinion within the group?
- Were issues brought up during the workshop that may need further comment at the next session?
- Is there any other unfinished business from this workshop's activities? If so, what is our plan for completing it?
- Were any couples missing from this workshop? Who will follow up with them?

Review and assign tasks for the next workshop, such as gathering materials and printing or photocopying handouts. Decide who will lead each section of the next workshop. Workshop 11 involves a celebration, which may require more time than usual, plus refreshments and decorations. An altar-making craft activity may also be part of the workshop. Be sure to have a plan in place.



## TAKING IT HOME

Affection Connection — Love

Extend your exploration of love by trying this activity on your own.

For Couples: Couple Covenant

Take some time together to work on your couple covenant. You are encouraged to refer to your work from earlier workshops.

If you need some prompts to develop your covenant, you can fill in these blanks, or you can use a form of your own.

We will bring a spirit of \_\_\_\_\_ to the way we relate.

We will try \_\_\_\_\_.

We will know \_\_\_\_\_.

We will strive to balance \_\_\_\_\_.

We will show each other \_\_\_\_\_.

We will help each other do/feel/be \_\_\_\_\_.

We affirm and promote \_\_\_\_\_ in our relationship.

Be ready to share your covenant with the other participants at the next workshop.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH IN ACTION — ARTICULATING OUR UU FAITH (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 4: [Who Are Unitarian Universalists?](#) (included in this document) (one per small group)
- Pens or pencils
- Tables or hard surfaces for writing
- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables, or find books or other hard surfaces for writing.

### Description of Activity

Many Unitarian Universalists have difficulty describing their faith tradition to people who are unfamiliar with it. This activity engages participants in describing our faith in meaningful ways. With the words of a variety of participants, the group will have a few more ideas in their toolbox when explaining Unitarian Universalism to others.

Invite participants to create small groups of two to three couples each. Give each group a pen or pencil and a copy of Handout 4, *Who Are Unitarian Universalists?* Invite participants to discuss the questions, with one member of the group recording responses on the handout.

After 15 minutes, re-gather the larger group. Ask participants to share their responses to each question as you take notes on newsprint. Ask the group what phrases or words are particularly illustrative of our faith tradition. Can they be helpful in articulating our faith?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PERSONAL MINI-ALTARS (45 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Metal mint tins with hinged tops (one per participant)
- A variety of materials to cover and decorate the tins, such as fabric scraps, tissue paper, embroidery thread, small beads, sequins, and tiny bells
- Old magazines (a variety, for cutting out pictures and words)
- Scissors (several pairs)
- Glue sticks and/or bottles of school glue
- Strong glue, like epoxy
- Tables (see Preparation)
- Newspaper, plastic tablecloths, or other means of covering the tables
- Newsprint sheet with list of questions (see Preparation)
- Easel
- Leader Resource 3: Personal Altar Questions
- Optional: Spray-on clear coating (to provide a smooth finish on the collage tins)

- Optional: Music and music player (see Preparation)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Arrange the room — or arrange for a room — so that participants can work at tables. Cover the tables with newspapers or plastic tablecloths. Place a variety of craft supplies at each table.
- On a newsprint sheet, print the questions from Leader Resource 3, Personal Altar Questions.
- If desired, choose some relaxing music to play during the activity.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite participants to sit at the tables. Give each participant one of the small tins. Explain the activity using these or similar words:

You will now have the opportunity to create small personal altars. These altars will incorporate symbols and words that you choose in order to remind yourself of the important things you have learned about yourself in these Principled Commitment workshops. You can choose what you would like to reflect in your small altar. It might be an insight, a source of personal strength you have tapped into, or something you learned and want to remember. The altar you build can be used along with a tea light candle to inspire personal reflection, meditation, or prayer in support of personal integrity and your relationship.

I'll begin by giving you some questions to reflect on silently. Then I will invite you to begin decorating your tin to create your personal altar. You might cut out small images and words from magazines and glue them to the tin. You can also decorate your tin with fabric, tissue

paper, beads, sequins, or any other craft materials you choose.

Your tin doesn't have to be a "work of art." The goal is simply to use your creativity to express what you want to be reminded of.

When everyone understands the activity, display the newsprint sheet with the list of questions from Leader Resource 3. Invite participants to spend a few minutes reflecting on these questions. You may wish to begin playing soft music in the background.

After several minutes, invite participants to begin creating their altars.

When the participants have finished, invite them to place their altars in a circle on a table. Allow time for group viewing in silence.

Explain that these personal mini-altars can be used with a larger altar that couples will create together in the next workshop.

Allow time for the glue to dry before participants take their altars home. If you have obtained a spray-on clear coating, participants may choose to apply it to their altar in order to create a smooth, protective finish.

### **Including All Participants**

Conducting this activity in a well-ventilated room is better for everyone's health. Some participants might be more sensitive than others to the chemicals in the craft products. Arrange the room so that participants can distance themselves from any "smelly" products if they need to, or provide distance between smelly products and participants by creating a station in a separate room for glue and spray-on coating.

## HANDOUT 1: SAYING "I LOVE YOU" WITHOUT THE USUAL WORDS

- Bring home a small gift for your partner, for no reason at all.
- Plan a surprise weekend away. It doesn't have to be far away or expensive, as long as it's just the two of you.
- Leave a message on your partner's voice mail saying how important that person is in your life.
- Do a chore your partner usually does without being asked to help.
- Serve breakfast, coffee, or tea in bed . . . anytime.
- Hug your partner or rub your partner's shoulders without expecting it to lead to sexual activity.
- Mail your partner a love letter (don't e-mail it).
- Tell your partner's family how much you admire your partner and why.
- Be courteous — open doors, hold chairs, take your partner's coat at the end of the day, say "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome."
- Flirt with your partner, regardless of how long you've been together.
- Cuddle while watching TV . . . and let your partner control the remote.
- While your partner's in the tub or shower, toss a bath towel in the dryer so you can wrap your partner in toasty warmth.

Other ideas:

## HANDOUT 2: THE TRIANGULAR THEORY OF LOVE

In his essay "Triangulating Love," Robert J. Sternberg, professor of psychology at Tufts University, describes love in a way that may be particularly helpful to *Principled Commitment* participants. His triangular theory of love focuses not on the reasons for love, but on how love relationships can be described in terms of three components: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment.

### Passion

Passion refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation in a loving relationship. Although sexual needs form the main part of passion in many relationships, other needs may also contribute to the experience of passion. These can include needs for self-esteem, affiliation with others, dominance over others, submission to others, and self-actualization.

### Intimacy

Intimacy refers to close, connected, and bonded feelings in loving relationships. Sternberg and S. Grajek have written an article called "The Nature of Love," in which they identify ten signs of intimacy in a close relationship:

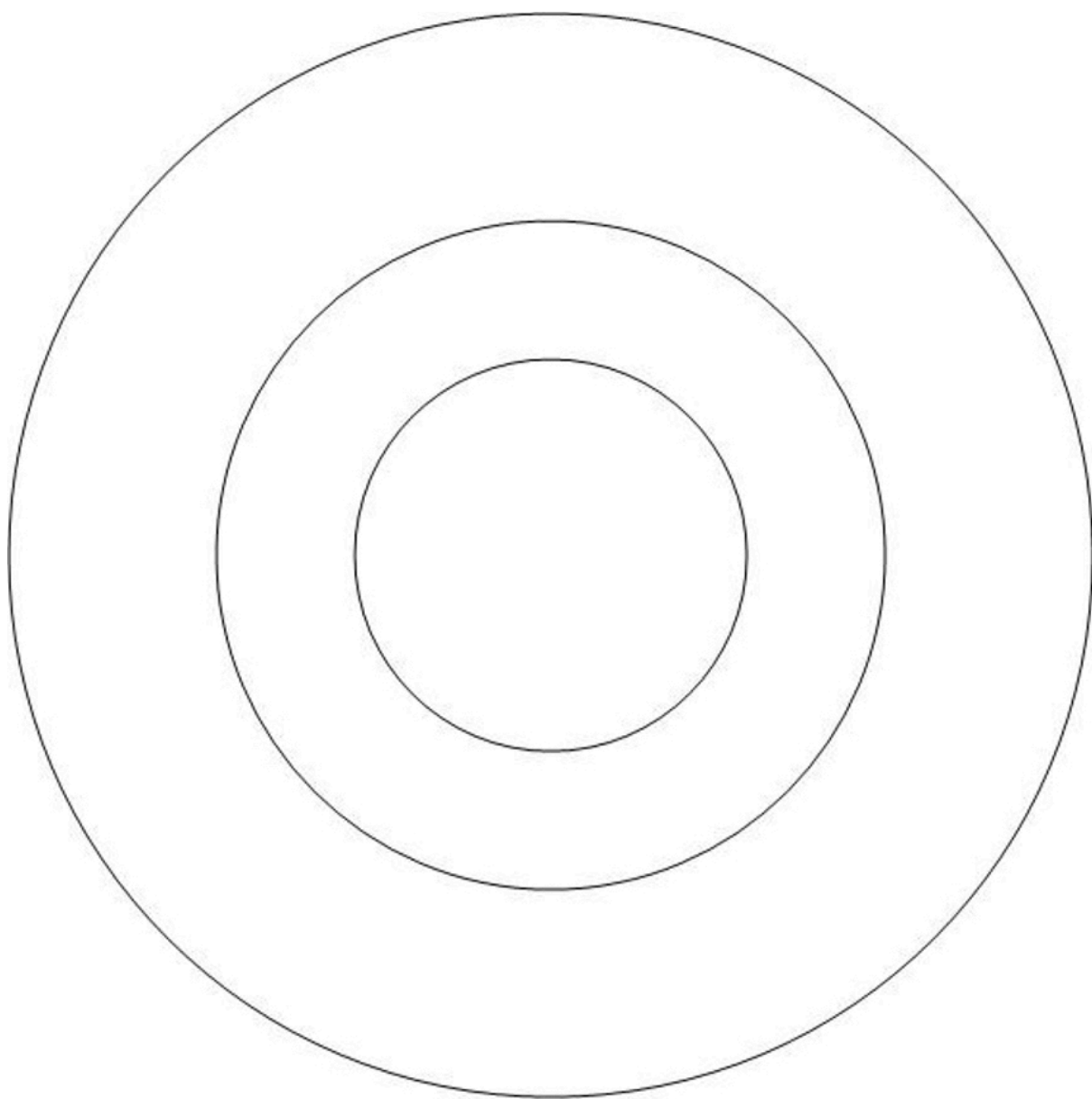
- Desiring to promote the welfare of the loved one

- Experiencing happiness with the loved one
- Having high regard for the loved one
- Being able to count on the loved one in times of need
- Mutual understanding with the loved one
- Sharing one's self and one's possessions with the loved one
- Receiving emotional support from the loved one
- Giving emotional support to the loved one
- Having intimate communication with the loved one
- Valuing the loved one in one's life

### Decision/Commitment

The "decision/commitment" component has both short-term and long-term aspects. In the short term, a person decides that he/she loves someone. In the long term, a person commits to maintaining that love. These two aspects do not necessarily go together, for a decision to love does not necessarily imply a commitment to that love. Similarly, many people are committed to the love of another person without necessarily even admitting that they love or are in love with that person. Most often, however, decision will precede commitment.

## HANDOUT 3: TENDER POINTS



## **HANDOUT 4: WHO ARE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS?**

*Describe Unitarian Universalism by filling in your group's responses to the questions below.*

Who are Unitarian Universalists?

What are our strengths?

What are our roles?

What are our important values?

What are our ethics?

How do we want to relate to the world?

How do we want to relate to individuals?

What are we proud of?

What do we respect about ourselves?

What do we believe?

What are our sources of inspiration?

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — LOVE

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 10, Love.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principles

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome participants. Explain that this workshop is devoted to the concept of love. Participants will explore the meaning of love as it is experienced and expressed by individuals and couples.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop: all seven Unitarian Universalist Principles.

We 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 transformative power of love underpins every Unitarian Universalist Principle. It is also the foundation for a healthy individual, a healthy couple, and a healthy community. Love can be seen as the source of meaning and as the expression of faith in human relationships. Remembering how to love, and acknowledging the need to give and to receive love, is the basis for all affirmative human relationships. Love can transform us, and can transform a hurting world.

Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place of connection. Envision yourself expressing love to your partner, with words or deeds. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes.]

Please maintain this spirit during the reading.

Reading

Read the following passage from *When All You Ever Wanted Isn't Enough* by Harold Kushner:

I was sitting on a beach one summer day, watching two children, siblings, playing in the sand. They were hard at work building an elaborate sand castle by the water's edge, with gates and towers and moats and internal passages. Just when they had nearly finished their project, a big wave came along and knocked it down, reducing it to a heap of wet sand. I expected the children to burst into tears, devastated by what had happened to all their hard work. But they surprised me. Instead, they ran up the shore away from the water, laughing, and holding hands, and sat down to build another castle. I realized that they had taught me an important lesson. All the things in our lives, all the complicated structures we spend so much time and energy creating are built on sand. Only our relationships to other people endure. Sooner or later, the wave will come along and knock down what we have worked so hard to build up. When that happens, only the person who has somebody's hand to hold will be able to laugh.

Sit in silence for another minute before saying:

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into this room and join our check-in.

## LEADER RESOURCE 2: TENDER POINTS GUIDELINES

*Copy these points onto a newsprint page for use during Activity 4, Tender Points.*

- To know me is to know my tender points, the sensitive and the sacred, and how they influence my life.
- To be my friend is to accept and respect all of those points as an integral part of my being.
- To love me is to take them into your heart for safekeeping so that I may be able to do the same for you.
- Love is not just about the romance; it is about friendship and compassion, as well.
- For if you do not know what hurts me, how can you truly love me?



## LEADER RESOURCE 3: PERSONAL ALTAR QUESTIONS

*Copy these questions onto a newsprint sheet for use during Alternate Activity 2, Personal Mini-Altars.*

- Who am I?
- What are my strengths?
- What are my roles?
- What are my important values?
- What are my ethics?
- How do I want to relate to the world?
- How do I want to relate to individuals?
- What am I proud of?
- What do I respect about myself?
- What do I believe?
- What are my sources of inspiration?

## FIND OUT MORE

hooks, bell [sic]. *All About Love: New Visions*. Harper, 2001.

Sternberg, Robert J. [Cupid's Arrow: The Course of Love through Time](#). Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Sternberg, Robert J., and Karin Weis. [The New Psychology of Love](#) (at [www.amazon.com/New-Psychology-Love-Robert-Sternberg/dp/0300116977/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1207082262&sr=1-5](http://www.amazon.com/New-Psychology-Love-Robert-Sternberg/dp/0300116977/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1207082262&sr=1-5)). Yale University Press, 2006.

# WORKSHOP 11: FAITH AND CELEBRATION

## INTRODUCTION

*Who so loves, believes the impossible.*  
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning, nineteenth-century poet

This final *Principled Commitment* workshop has two parts. First, it looks at the spiritual dimension of relationships. What is the role of faith, and how does it intertwine in the deep connection of two people? Participants will be invited to articulate the mutual identity of two lives coming together in a healthy and whole relationship. Second, the workshop is a culmination and celebration of life and love within the community. This is an opportunity to honor the work and effort of the participants and to express the joy of coming together, making new friends, and deepening relationships with partners.

This is the last time these individuals will gather as a *Principled Commitment* group. Therefore, this workshop is designed to emphasize what participants have learned and to provide an opportunity for them to articulate their learning.

Guiding Unitarian Universalist Principles  
All Seven Principles

This final workshop is a culmination of all that has been explored and learned during the program. Couples will explore their faith, naming those things on which they "place their hearts." Individuals will be able to celebrate their part in a shared identity made up of two lives that have come together in a healthy and whole relationship. It is a well-deserved celebration of life and love among the community.

### Considerations for Adaptation

The core activities in this workshop fill two hours. You can plan a celebration directly after the activities, in which case extra time must be budgeted, or you can plan a celebration for a future date.

The celebration can range from sharing a simple snack to a potluck dinner at someone's home. You may want to invite participants to plan the celebration. Elect to celebrate in a way that makes sense to the group and fits with its level of interpersonal bonding.

If couples have not had time to complete their couple covenants before this workshop, offer some time for them to do so before Activity 3, Couple Covenants Revisited.

Alternate Activity 3, Creating Couple Altars, provides a creative and concrete way for couples to take their learnings from *Principled Commitment* home.

## GOALS

This workshop will:

- Examine faith and its role in relationships
- Offer an opportunity for program evaluation
- Provide closure and celebration for the participating couples

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss the meaning of faith
- Share their couple covenant with the group
- Celebrate the friendships they have formed and the things they have learned
- Articulate their couple identity and their faith through creative expression

## WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Check-in	20
Activity 2: Relationships and Faith	30
Activity 3: Couple Covenants Revisited	30
Activity 4: Program Evaluation	10
Closing	20
Alternate Activity 1: Celebration	60
Alternate Activity 2: Faith in Action — <i>Principled Commitment</i>	30
Alternate Activity 3: Creating Couple Altars	45

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Set aside some time to reflect on your faith. In what or whom do you have faith? What do you "place your heart on"? How do you express that faith in daily life?

Recall how you have felt leading this program. Consider writing your thoughts down and sharing some of them with the group on the last day you meet.

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Pen or pencil
- An agenda of this workshop's activities on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

### Preparation for Activity

- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, create an agenda listing the activities for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

### Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create name tags. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

## OPENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Leader Resource 1: [Order of Service — Faith and Celebration](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, and matches or a lighter.

### Description of Activity

Refer to Leader Resource 1, Order of Service — Faith and Celebration, to conduct the opening. You may adapt the service to fit with your group's interest as well as

your congregation's identity and customs. The Order of Service is provided as a starting point.

### Including All Participants

Pay attention to the modulation of your voice throughout the opening, and particularly during the meditation. Make sure that your tone is gentle and meditative, but keep your volume high enough to be heard throughout the room. Note that some participants may need to keep their eyes open during the meditation in order to understand your words.

## ACTIVITY 1: CHECK-IN (20 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to take turns briefly sharing insights they have had since the previous workshop on love.

Ask:

- What does it feel like to be together as a group for our last workshop?

You can take more time than usual for this activity, as it is the final check-in of the program.

## ACTIVITY 2: RELATIONSHIPS AND FAITH (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers

### Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

The term "faith" has many meanings. The most common expression of the term reflects a belief in things that can't be proven through conventional means, such as a belief in the existence of God.

However, more ancient meanings of faith — from India and Rome — speak to a broader definition: to have faith in something, to believe in it, means to place one's heart upon it. We can place our hearts upon things that are both proven and unproven. That on which we place our hearts is that toward which we orient our lives.

Faith can also mean a sort of confidence, a belief in the potential of tomorrow. Sometimes faith comes in the form of patience, which allows things to take their natural course, to unfold in their own natural time.

Invite participants to reflect what they have faith in — what they orient their lives toward, both as individuals and as couples. Record ideas on newsprint.

Ask participants to choose some items from the list that speak to them most clearly, and to pair up with their partners to discuss their understanding of faith with each other. Suggest that they include in their discussion the question of how they might express their faith in their daily lives.

## ACTIVITY 3: COUPLE COVENANTS REVISITED (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Couple covenants created by participants (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Assign the "Affection Connection" in Workshop 10, and ask participants to bring their finished covenants to this workshop. Emphasize that they will be sharing their covenants with the other participants.

### Description of Activity

Invite willing couples to share the covenants they have created together. Remind the group of its ground rules and its commitment to confidentiality. Clarify that couples may choose to keep some or all of their covenant private.

Couples can take turns coming to the front of the group and reading the words that they have pledged to affirm and strive for together. After each covenant is read, affirm the thoughtfulness, care, and hard work demonstrated in it. Invite all those present to pledge their support of this couple in fulfilling their covenant together.

After all couples who wish to have shared, discuss:

- How can we as a group support one another in upholding our covenants?
- How can our congregation support these covenants and others made by those in our community?

Encourage participants to frame their covenants and put them in a prominent place at home, so they are reminded of what they promised to each other.

## ACTIVITY 4: PROGRAM EVALUATION (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [\*Principled Commitment Participant Evaluation\*](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Pens or pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- You may wish to customize the evaluation form to suit the needs of your congregation.

### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 1, *Principled Commitment Participant Evaluation*, and pens or pencils. Ask all participants to complete the evaluation now. Collect the evaluations when finished.

## CLOSING (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Tea light candles (one per participant and leader)
- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Optional: *Singing the Living Tradition* or other songbook (at least one copy; preferably one per participant)

### Preparation for Activity

- Set tea light candles around the base of the chalice, one for each participant and leader.
- Select a familiar song or hymn for the group to sing together. If you do not have songbooks for each participant, write the lyrics on newsprint. If you have a guitarist or piano player in the group you may wish to arrange for musical accompaniment.

### Description of Activity

Gather participants around the chalice. Light the chalice (if it is not still lit) and a tea candle, and express gratitude for the group and what has been learned.

Invite each participant to light a candle and share something she/he has learned or would like to say to the group.

Invite everyone to sing a familiar song or hymn. Distribute songbooks or post the lyrics.

As you extinguish the chalice, read the following closing words:

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here with our partners. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leader soon after the workshop to evaluate the experience of leading *Principled Commitment*. Consider these questions:

- What was most rewarding about conducting this program? What was difficult?
- What do you feel was your biggest strength in your leadership?
- In what area do you wish you had stronger leadership skills?
- What observations or suggestions do you have to share with your congregation's religious educator or minister?
- Are there suggestions or comments that need follow-up? If so, make a plan for addressing them.
- What did you like best about co-leading this program?
- Name the best thing about working with your co-leader.

Read participants' evaluations together. Arrange for copies of the evaluations to be sent to the Adult Programs Director at [adultprograms@uua.org](mailto:adultprograms@uua.org).

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CELEBRATION (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Refreshments
- Optional: Altars and other craft projects that participants have completed

### Preparation for Activity

- Plan the details of the celebration, or invite participants to do the planning.
- Delegate the responsibility for bringing refreshments for the celebration.

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to socialize and celebrate as planned. You may wish to display the altars and other craft projects that participants have completed.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FAITH IN ACTION (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist Principles (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- Download the [Unitarian Universalist Principles from the UUA website](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml)). Make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Invite couples to sit together. Assign each couple one of the seven Principles.

Allow five to ten minutes or more for couples to apply the following two questions to their assigned Principle:

- How is my relationship with my partner affected by my affirming this Principle?
- How is our congregation affected by us, as a couple, affirming this Principle?

After the reflection, invite each couple to share their reflections with the larger group. Encourage participants to add their ideas for how to live this Principle in a relationship.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CREATING COUPLE ALTARS (45 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- 18-in. squares of attractive fabric, such as velvet or silk (one square per couple)
- 8-in. square pieces of foam core board or luan plywood (one per couple)
- Pencils
- Rulers or other straightedge tools
- Craft paints and fabric paints in many different colors
- Paintbrushes (at least one per person)
- Water cups and water (to clean paintbrushes)
- Tables (see Preparation)
- Newspaper, plastic tablecloths, or other means of covering the tables
- Newsprint sheet with examples of altar design themes (see Preparation)
- Easel

- Optional: Music and music player (see Preparation)

### Preparation for Activity

- On a sheet of newsprint, list or draw examples of themes that could be used in decorating the four quadrants of a couple's altar. Examples might include: North, South, East, West; Love, Faith, Gratitude, Hope; a flaming chalice, a cross, a pentacle, a Star of David; and so on.
- If desired, choose soft music that will help set a meditative mood for the activity.
- Arrange the room — or arrange for a room — so that participants can work on their art projects at tables. Cover the tables with newspapers or plastic tablecloths. Distribute the fabric squares, foam or plywood boards, pencils, rulers, paints, brushes, and cups of water on the tables.

### Description of Activity

Explain that in this activity, couples will jointly create a piece that expresses their faith in one another as well as their broader faith. This piece will be an altar, or focal point, to use for moments of shared contemplation, meditation, or prayer in the home. It can serve as a centerpiece at the dining table, sit in the corner of a room, or be brought out just for special occasions. The altar or centering piece can serve as a site of family rituals and a reminder of the couple's faith and love.

You may wish to play meditative music in the background as couples create their altars.

Offer these or similar instructions:

Find your piece of fabric and lay it flat. This will be your altar cloth. Now take the board, which will be your altar, and center it on the cloth. You may line it up straight or position it diagonally, whichever you prefer. When you have it in position, use a pencil to lightly trace the outline of the board onto the cloth.

When couples have completed this step, continue:

Set the cloth aside for now. Use a pencil and ruler to divide the board into four equal quadrants.

Next, paint each quadrant a different color. You can choose colors that will coordinate with the altar cloth, although this is not required. Be sure to paint the edges too.

When couples have completed this step, show them the newsprint sheet on which you have listed examples of possible themes for the four quadrants. Explain:

You can choose to leave the four quadrants just as they are, or you can use the fabric and craft paints to add accents and designs. If you like, you can paint words or symbols on each quadrant to symbolize four different concepts or qualities. Here are some examples, but you can use anything you like.

After participants have decorated the quadrants, continue:

Now take your altar cloth and decorate the area outside the square you traced. You can decorate it in any way you desire — with a design, representations of things (flowers, sun, moon, stars), or icons. Decorate it in a way that is meaningful to both of you.

When the work is complete, or close to complete, invite couples to arrange their cloth and altar for display. (Caution them not to place the altar on the cloth if the paint is still wet.) Invite participants to move around the room and look at each other's work.

Suggest that at home, the personal altars from Workshop 10's Alternate Activity 2 can be added to the couple altar, creating a symbol of the individual and mutual aspects of each couple's relationship.

### Including All Participants

Conducting this activity in a well-ventilated room is better for everyone's health. Some participants might be more sensitive than others to the chemicals in the craft products. Arrange the room so that participants can distance themselves from any "smelly" products if they need to, or provide distance between smelly products and participants by creating a station in a separate room.



## HANDOUT 1: PRINCIPLED COMMITMENT PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

*Leaders: Evaluations are conducted primarily for you and your congregation's benefit. The UUA appreciates receiving copies of evaluations, the feedback from which can be used in future revisions of the curriculum. Send copies of the feedback forms to: Adult Programs Director, Unitarian Universalist Association, 24 Farnsworth St., Boston, MA 02210-1409, or e-mail them to [adultprograms@uua.org](mailto:adultprograms@uua.org) (at <mailto:adultprograms@uua.org>).*

Please complete this evaluation. Your thoughtful input will strengthen this program for others.

What was the most valuable aspect of this program for you?

What was the least valuable aspect of this program for you?

Which workshops or activities were the most memorable? Why?

Do you have suggestions for improving *Principled Commitment*? What might be added, changed, or deleted?

How strongly would you recommend this program to your friends?

Would not recommend it \_\_\_\_\_

Might suggest it to some \_\_\_\_\_

Would recommend it to many \_\_\_\_\_

Would recommend it to almost all \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the overall program on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent? \_\_\_\_\_ Comments:

How would you rate the knowledge and skill of the program's leaders on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent? \_\_\_\_\_ Comments:

Additional comments:

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: ORDER OF SERVICE — FAITH AND CELEBRATION

*Follow this Order of Service as you lead the opening of Workshop 11, Faith and Celebration.*

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

Principles

Guided Meditation

Reading

Welcome

Welcome everyone and explain that this workshop is a celebration of participants' hard work and effort over the past weeks. It is a time to glean and articulate what they have learned or gained over the group's time together. It is also a time to talk about faith and covenants — those things that can sustain a couple for the long haul.

Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice while reading the following words:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith: to seek truth and honesty, to build respect, and to foster greater trust among all people, beginning with ourselves. May we dedicate our time together to these purposes.

Principle

Introduce the guiding Unitarian Universalist Principle for this workshop: all seven Unitarian Universalist Principles.

We 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.

This final workshop is a culmination of all that has been explored and learned during the program. Here you will explore your faith, naming those things on which you "place your hearts." You will also be able to celebrate your part in a shared identity made up of two lives that have come together in a healthy and whole relationship. It is a well-deserved celebration of life and love among the community.

### Guided Meditation

Lead participants through the following guided meditation to center them for the rest of the workshop. Read the words slowly, pausing between phrases.

I invite you into a time of silence. Try to sit with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Perhaps close your eyes. Take a deep breath, inhale . . . and exhale. Take another deep breath . . . and exhale. Again; this time, as you exhale, let go of all the pressures of the day. Let go of the "to dos," the "should haves" . . . just let them float out of the room. You can return to them later. Take another deep breath. As you inhale, take in the energy of this place. As you exhale, let go of any tension or stress you might be feeling.

[Long pause]

Come into this place of connection. Envision yourself celebrating your partner. It is a gift you are giving each other. What does it feel like? What does it look like?

[Sit in silence for two to three minutes, then say:]

Please maintain this spirit as I read the poem.

Poem

Read the following adapted excerpt from "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman.

Afoot and light-hearted, I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me.  
Henceforth I ask not good fortune —  
I myself am good fortune;  
Strong and content,  
I travel the open road.

I inhale great draughts of space;  
The east and the west are mine,  
And the north and the south are mine.  
All seems beautiful to me;  
I can repeat over to men and women,  
You have done such good to me,  
I would do the same to you.

Whoever you are, come travel with me!  
However sweet these laid-up stores —  
However convenient this dwelling,  
we cannot remain here.  
However sheltered this port,  
and however calm these waters  
We must not anchor here;

Together! The inducements shall be greater;  
We will sail pathless and wild seas;  
We will go where winds blow,  
Waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by  
Under full sail.

Forward! After the great Companions!  
And to belong to them. They too are on the road!  
Onward! To that which is endless,  
As it is beginningless,  
To undergo much,  
tramps of days, rests of nights,  
To see nothing anywhere  
but what you may reach it and pass it.

To look up or down no road  
but it stretches and waits for you —  
To know the universe itself as a road —  
As many roads —  
As roads for traveling souls.

Sit for another minute of silence, then say,

When you are ready, please bring your focus back into  
this room and join our check-in.

## FIND OUT MORE

Parks, Sharon Daloz. *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Salzberg, Sharon. *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*. Riverhead, 2002.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *Faith and Belief*. Princeton University Press, 1979.