

GRADES 4 - 6
SESSION 1: LOOKING IN/LOOKING OUT

INTRODUCTION

Unitarian Universalists seek always to discover deeper truth and meaning in our lives and in our experience of the world. — Gail Forsyth-Vail

One of the challenges of being human is discerning who we are in relation to the world around us. As we grow and develop, especially in faith, we realize this discernment is a dynamic, lifelong process. Our Unitarian Universalist faith enriches this process for each of us by encouraging us to examine who we truly are. Being comfortable with ourselves grounds us to look openly and caringly at others.

In this introductory session, participants begin to explore how individuality creates the lens through which we view others and all life that shares our planet. In future sessions, participants will develop a heightened awareness of how they bring their own lenses to diverse experiences outside themselves.

The story for this session is about a man who knew he needed to follow his own path. Charles Darwin became famous after writing *The Origin of Species*, his controversial book which proposed that all life evolved from simple organisms which became more complex over time. For some, Darwin's theory contradicted bible-based creationism, the idea that God created the world. Darwin's theory offered a fresh way of seeing—a new lens. Although Darwin's father wanted him to become a doctor, Darwin resisted. He was fascinated instead with the natural world and the animals and plants living in it. Darwin was called to follow his own path, his true, inner self. He made observations and drew conclusions in his own, unique way. As a result his prophetic ideas changed the way we see ourselves in relation to time, life on this planet and, ultimately, the universe.

This program focuses participants on their ability and responsibility to look both within and without—tools for lifelong moral agency. The children experience their Unitarian Universalist faith community as a place to be their true selves and a base from which their observations, reflections and responses to the world around them are accepted and respected. Here we are encouraged to open our eyes, ears and hearts to the ways we are called to live a life of love, caring and service.

SESSION PLAN

MATERIALS

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Large, round mirror to hold the chalice
- Reflective materials, such as beads or pieces of stained glass
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Opening Words Basket and opening words
- Cardstock or construction paper for participants
- Markers in a variety of colors
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors), glue sticks and tape

ACTIVITY TWO MATERIALS

- Three or more large magnifying glasses
- Three objects that would be interesting to examine closely, such as a rock, a granola bar, a leaf, a marble or a bowl of marbles or an article of clothing

- Paper and pencils for participants

LESSON ACTIVITY 1: INNER/OUTER SELF-PORTRAIT (20 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

The children consider how they appear to others and how they see themselves as they make two self-portraits, one on each side of a sheet of paper.

Invite participant(s) to consider who they are in the world. How might others who are meeting them for the first time see them? Guide them to think about not only their physical appearance, but the ways they like to spend their time. Do they like baseball, ballet, both? Do they like to go to a library, swimming pool, playground, shopping mall, your church? Are they animal lovers, outdoor people, video-game players, fashion lovers, music fans, musicians? Do they think they are smart, funny, shy, a good friend?

You might say:

Think about the way other people in your life see and experience you. What do people see you are interested in? How do people see you interact with others?

Give participant(s) time, at least five minutes, to work on their outer self-portraits.

In the second part of this activity, participants create an inner self-portrait. Say something like:

We have been looking at our outer selves and how others may see us. Now turn over your paper and think about your inner self. Think about what you know about the inside of yourself. Who is your true self? What are the dreams and thoughts that maybe just a few people—or maybe only you—know? Think about your inner self for a few moments. Then create a self-portrait of the inner you with drawings, words, or symbols.

You will not have to share your inner self-portrait.

- What are the differences between their inner and outer self-portraits?
- Was one portrait harder than the other to make?
- How does who you are affect how you see others and how you see the world?
- Does anything about your portrait show that you are a Unitarian Universalist?

ACTIVITY 2: LOOKING CLOSELY (10 MINUTES) - SMALL GROUP OR FAMILY ACTIVITY

Description of Activity

This activity illustrates the importance of observation and serves as a metaphor for how we each observe the world through our own lenses.

Distribute paper and pencils and invite participants to go to each station and take turns looking at each object with a magnifying glass. Ask that they observe and take notes in silence.

Then, re-gather the group, hold up each object in turn, and ask volunteers to share what they observed about it. Point out the variety in the group's observations. For example, some children will notice what ingredients are in a granola bar, while others may note its colors or texture.

Invite the group to discuss:

- Why did we each see different things?

- Were any observations false? Were any true? What, if anything, can we agree is a fact, taking all of our observations into account?

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.

Talk about what it means to observe carefully and why and how we each use a unique lens as we look at our world. What does it mean that each person sees things differently?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.

Try a family activity. Everyone gets a clean sock. Decorate the outer part of the sock with buttons, ribbon, and other materials found around the house. For the inside of your sock, write or draw on little pieces of paper your thoughts, wishes and dreams. Fold these and place them inside. You might like to fill each sock in a ceremonious way, with a candle-lighting to begin and words for each person's sock-filling such as:

Bless (family member), beloved inside and out.

Invite family members to share what they have written on the paper and talk about what it reveals.

FAMILY ADVENTURE

Walk through your home together and examine your windows. Are they framed as decorations or "dressed" in a way that encourages people to look outward? Or walk outside. Do your windows invite looking in or are they closed to outside passers-by?

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WINDOWS AND MIRRORS: SESSION 1:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: OPENING WORDS FOR BASKET

The authors of these readings have given approval for their use.

After downloading, add opening words alternatives commonly used in your congregation or other readings you like. Print them and cut so each reading is on a separate slip of paper.

We gather this hour as people of faith
With joys and sorrows, gifts and needs
We light this beacon of hope, sign of our quest
For truth and meaning,
In celebration of the life we share together.

— Christine Robinson, Reading 448, Singing the Living Tradition

Life is a gift for which we are grateful. We gather in community to celebrate the glories and the mysteries of this gift.

— Marjorie Montgomery, Reading 452, Singing the Living Tradition

May the light we now kindle
Inspire us to use our powers
To heal and not to harm,
To help and not to hinder,
To bless and not to curse,
To serve you,
Spirit of freedom.

— from a Jewish Passover Haggadah, Reading 453, Singing the Living Tradition

We are Unitarian Universalists
With minds that think (hands tap head lightly)
Hearts that love (hands tap heart lightly)
And hands that are ready to serve (hands outstretched).

— David Herndon (from Rejoice Together)

We light this chalice to celebrate the love within us, among us, and all around us.

— David Herndon (from Rejoice Together)