



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network
CREATING OUR OWN REALITY session plan
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(TOPIC READINGS start on p. 4)

OUR SMALL GROUP MISSION

These Small Group conversations are offered as a way to get to know each other better, as we explore the various topics selected by our Small Group Team, related to our life experiences, questions, joys, and challenges. We are free to share our thoughts and feelings, joys and struggles, as we choose, and are here to listen to and care about each other. (We are NOT here to be a therapy group ~ or to tackle “church politics”!)

We look forward to building closer connections with each other, as we spend this time together, and form new or deeper friendships and build our sense of community.

OUR SMALL GROUP COVENANT

As members of this Small Group of the Universalist Church, we covenant with each other to help make this experience both personally and spiritually rewarding, to nourish our sense of community, and to learn and practice right relationship.

We will try to arrive before the beginning of each session so that it can start on time. We will try to attend all of the meetings of our group unless we are ill or away, and will let the group know in advance when that will occur or by contacting the facilitator:

Facilitator Contact information:

We use these guidelines for sharing, as a pathway to a caring community:

- We will deeply listen and ask honest and open questions.
- We will respect confidentiality. What is said here stays here, unless we agree to share something outside of our group.
- We will allow others to speak without interruption.
- We will not try to fix, save, advise or correct.
- We will honor time for reflection and quietness and respect a member’s right to remain silent, as they choose.
- We will treat others with respect and without judgment.
- We will honor the diversity of thought and feeling and values among us.

CHECK IN

Check-in is a time to deepen our connections with each other by sharing joys, sorrows, challenges, and changes in our lives. Sharing is not required. Only share if you are comfortable. What is shared in group is confidential.

Connection is the energy created between people when they feel seen, heard, valued and understood. One of the goals of small group is to move out of our heads and into our hearts in order to deepen our connections with one other.

Authentic sharing from a place of honesty and vulnerability allows us to build a community of trust, caring, and belonging. The connections we build with one another become contagious. They grow and spread and infuse our larger church community with life and vitality.

1. WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS :

Let's remember to **Silence cell phones! Speak up clearly, so all can hear.**

Remind folks to let us know and to remind us if they have a hearing issue or if we aren't speaking up enough, so we can be aware.

• At FIRST SESSION of the series: Let's introduce ourselves:

"Tell us a bit about yourself, for example:"

- Your name, where you live and how long you've been in this area
- How long have you been a UU, coming to our church
- Your family, what you do (or did) for work, any special passions or hobbies
(Model this by starting with yourself.)

Distribute MISSION/COVENANT/CHECK IN handout.

- **Read the MISSION statement orally - volunteers read COVENANT**
- **Remind folks to contact the facilitator if you are unable to come to a session** (if not included, give them your contact info. to add to their copy)
- **Read the CHECK-IN orally, in turn.**
- "Since time has been spent on introductions today (tonight), **we'll keep our check-in short**"; ex. "**Might you have a joy or feeling of gratitude you can share with us?**"

2. CHECK IN: (at 2nd and later sessions: repeat names again, if needed, and read the following aloud, as you choose):

Check-in is a time to deepen our connections with each other by sharing joys, sorrows, challenges, and changes in our lives. Sharing is not required. Only share if you are comfortable. What is shared in group is confidential.

Some **CHECK-IN PROMPTS:**

- *How have these past couple of weeks gone for you?*
- *Can you share some of your 'highs' and/or 'lows'?*
- *Has anything brought you a sense of gratitude or accomplishment? - of joy - or sorrow?*

3. OPENING: Use "chime" or bell to quiet folks; **LIGHT CANDLE:**

(3 reading choices below, you might vary this from session to session)

- *May "our separate fires kindle one flame" as we gather in this circle—bringing our stories, our reflections, our hopes and our struggles.
May our candle flame lend light and promise for our time together.*
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- *May we know once again that we are not isolated beings, but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to this community and to each other.*  
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- *May our time together bring learning, understanding, compassion, encouragement, and hope as we share about our life journeys and passions.*

4. CENTERING: *In preparation for our conversation, let's take a few moments to center ourselves and be thankful for this time we have together in community.*

Please get comfortable, place both feet solidly on the floor, rest your hands on your thighs and let your shoulders drop. Gently close your eyes or focus on a spot a few feet in front of you on the floor. Bring your attention to the flow of your breath.

*Breathing in I calm my body.
Breathing out I smile.*

*Dwelling in this present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment.*

Our life's path is not one we travel alone. We are in it together, and the company of spiritual friends helps us feel our interconnectedness.

Ring the chime: *"Slowly open your eyes."*

5. DISTRIBUTE READING:

Ask for **volunteers to read the paragraphs aloud, in turn.** You might include a **pause after the reading**, to allow time to reflect before responding.

6. POSE QUESTIONS to prompt sharing, invite folks to respond if and as they choose; If you choose, you can **split readings into sections**, with questions/conversation as you go along (some readings are already done this way).

Encourage silent spaces between reflections; be comfortable with silence.

You might prompt: **"Take some time to think about that."** - or the like.

FEEL FREE TO ADJUST or ADAPT THE QUESTIONS PROVIDED

You may not get to all of them, or you may want to modify them slightly or skip around a bit, even make up a new question, depending on what comes up in the conversation, to keep it moving along.

KEEPING YOUR GROUP ON TRACK: If a group member should go on and on, or responds inappropriately so that **conversation needs redirection**, gently ask that they give others an opportunity to share or say something like:

- **"Let's reconsider the question"**
- **"Let's stop now and take a moment to reflect."**
- **"Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Now let's move on".**

You can also make reference to the covenant.

(If you are co-facilitating, work out a collaboration system with your partner, such as: when the other is facilitating, feel free to help guide the conversation, step in if you see a need to redirect.)

If the conversation has slowed down, you as facilitator can model responses to help the conversation along. **Some prompts could be:**

- **What are your thoughts about that?**
- **How does it make you feel?**
- **Can you say more about that?**
- **What does it make you think of?**

If the topic is really not going well, turn it back to the group:

- **"What do you want to do with this topic?"**

CREATING OUR OWN REALITY

(readings from a sermon by Rev. Dr. Elaine Peresluha)

READING: Commentary by Dr. Joe Dispenza from *What the BLEEP Do We Know!?*

"I wake up in the morning and I consciously create my day the way I want it to happen.When I create my day, and out of nowhere little things happen that are so unexplainable, I know that they are the process or the result of my creation. And the more I do that, the more I build a neural net in my brain that I accept that that's possible....

So if we're consciously designing our destiny, and if we're consciously, from a spiritual standpoint, throwing in with the idea that our thoughts can affect our reality or affect our life -- because reality equals life -- then I have this little pact that I have when I create my day. I say, 'I'm taking this time to create my day and I'm infecting the quantum field. and there is a spiritual aspect to myself... and so I live my life, in a sense, all day long thinking about being a genius or thinking about being the glory and the power of God or being unconditional love.... creating that reality and living it. "

Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Doctor of Alternative Medicine and author of *The Hidden Messages in Water*, experimented with water and its molecular structure's response to thoughts and feelings to prove that our thoughts and feelings affect physical reality. Dr. Emoto captured water's 'expressions through molecular photography- and watched it change in response to expressions of hatred and violence or love and gratitude- If human beings are over 70% water- are we not affected as well by expressions and experiences of violence and hatred? Love and gratitude?

Psychologists and social scientists have come to realize how belief affects perception, and that human beings have the ability to control what they believe. We have the capacity to go beyond self-limiting belief to discover things about the world that we could never have imagined. Modern medical science has to constantly confront and navigate around the placebo effect in using control groups when testing possible cures for disease. There are consistent positive results with placebos when people believe they are taking a drug, which will cure them. Doctors see it all the time. The desire to live, and belief in healing plays a critical role in people's ability to return to health.

It is scientific fact- what we believe matters. It is not enough to think something - you have to practice believing. What we believe shapes the reality around us by making us open or closed to certain experiences. What we believe, we attract - we notice.

From Marianne Williamson:

In the century now dawning, spirituality, visionary consciousness, and the ability to build and mend human relationships will be more important for the fate and safety of this nation than our capacity to forcefully subdue an enemy. Creating the world we want is a much more subtle but more powerful mode of operation than destroying the one we don't want.

We each have the ability to discern if our beliefs serve the world. Watch, listen, and truly hear what comes out of your heart and your mouth. We have the capacity to change our beliefs - to change how we effect the reality around us.

We do it. We decide.

The world is a reflection of our thoughts and beliefs - Create the world you want – be the power of love, compassion and perfection - and watch it unfold.

QUESTIONS on next page:

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- How do our beliefs affect our experience of the world? What pops out from your own experience as you consider these readings?
- Share an experience in which you made an effort to create a new reality for yourself. What were the results?
- Share a past encounter, either positive or negative, in which another person's beliefs affected your behavior, and possibly that of others as well.
- Share a time when your attitude, thoughts, and/or beliefs had a positive effect on others and helped create a new reality for them.
- What beliefs are you holding that do not serve you, your family or our world?
- Can you think of how you might reframe these into constructive beliefs that reflect what you want, what could be helpful to yourself or others, rather than what you fear or dislike?

From Gretchen Rubin, author of the bestseller, "The Happiness Project":

One of the most helpful things I've learned in my happiness research is that although we think that we *act* because of the way we *feel*, in fact, we often *feel* because of the way we *act*.

As a result, one of my Twelve Commandments is "Act as I would feel." And as improbable as it may sound, it really works. Try it. If you don't like the way you're feeling, act as you'd like to feel—and your feelings will change. Like magic.

For example, studies show that even an artificially induced smile brings about happier emotions. William James sums up the phenomenon nicely: "Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not."

QUESTIONS:

- Can you think of a time when this happened to you?
- Do you have something happening in your life now where you might try this?

As CONVERSATION comes to an end, you might ask for **last thoughts on the topic**:

"Do you have a thought from this conversation that you will carry home with you?"

CLOSING READINGS on next page:

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Mary Baker Eddy pioneered the belief that human beings could control their reality - their health through the management of their beliefs. She believed and reclaimed the perfection of love in the universe unfolding.

This day is merely a step in infinite progress.

It is unfoldment not time.

It brings no belief of delay in success, no disappointment.

*It adds no fear, no age, no deterioration, no decay, no sin, no materiality,
no belief in matter.*

It only adds wisdom, power, dominion, law, and the presence of well done.

*My treatment now establishes the law of this day,
and obliterates the supposition or belief in any other law.*

Principle governs me and mine this day.

*This day is unfoldment in which every detail and incident is but an illustration
of divine presence, power and wisdom.*

~ Mary Baker Eddy

In a pond koi can reach lengths of eighteen inches. Amazingly, when placed in a lake, koi can grow to three feet long. The metaphor is obvious. You are limited by how you see the world. - Vince Poscente

RING CHIME and EXTINGUISH CANDLE (Choose one of these or one of your choice):

As our time together comes to a close, we give thanks for one another, for the chance to share our lives, and to renew our spirits in the company of friends. May we go forth enriched by our gathering, committed to living life fully, to loving life with more passion, and to supporting one another.

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*Remembering that the universe is so much larger than our ability to comprehend, let us go forth from this time together with the resolve to stop trying to reduce the incomprehensible to our own petty expectations, so that wonder -- that sense of what is sacred -- can find space to open up our minds and illumine our lives.*

**ANNOUNCE NEXT SESSION'S TOPIC: (unless last session)**

**Ask for a volunteer to bring in a CLOSING reading (if needed) for this next session** (It can be something they particularly like, doesn't necessarily have to relate to the topic.)

**if providing SNACKS, ask for a volunteer**