

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist, Palatine, IL
CCUU Covenant Group Session
Can You Come Out and Play?

Pre-Meeting Preparation

At the end of the previous session, or sometime before this session, give to group members the preparation page for this session (attached at the end of this document.)

Preliminaries

Chalice Lighting and Reading

We light this chalice to embrace the child in each of us. The child that knows how to play. The child that is fascinated by keys and dandelions, by clouds and balls that bounce. The child that dreams and imagines and creates wonders out of nothing. The child who is always in the moment yet touches and embraces s where dragons fly and horses run free. The child that doesn't yet know the difference between the possible and impossible.

--Stephanie Certain Matz

Check-in.

Transition Meditation and Reading

Help the group move from check-in preliminaries to silence with directed deep breathing, soft words, music, or other meditative techniques.

One day a little boy was playing in front of his house, when it occurred to him that he had never seen an adult playing with a red wagon like his. And he burst into tears.

When his mother asked why he was crying, the boy said he was afraid that when he grew up he wouldn't be able to play with his red wagon anymore.

The mother assured the child that when he grew up he could play with his red wagon if he wanted to. That quieted him for a moment. Then he burst into even greater sobs.

The mother asked, "What's the matter now?" The boy replied, "I'm afraid that when I grow up, I won't want to play with my red wagon anymore."

- Anthony Friess Perrino, The Numbering of Our Days (adapted)

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

1. Think of a time in your life when you were really having FUN. What were you doing? What were you feeling? Can you tell that story?
2. What were your favorite ways to play as a child? What made them interesting and exciting?
3. How do you "play" as an adult? Why do you value this kind of play?
- 4.. Compare your childhood play to recreation you enjoy as an adult. Do the differences or similarities indicate anything meaningful about you and your life?

Optional Questions or Activities for Facilitator

1. Do you ever feel like you just don't deserve, or can't afford to, have more fun? Why?
- 2.. What would you do if you could spend an entire day just playing? What's stopping you from doing it?

Check-out

Closing Reading/Extinguishing the Chalice

Reading:

May I remember to keep my face to the sun,
To play, laugh, and experience joy
 whenever possible,
To celebrate the world and my fellow
 human beings,
To say *YES!* to life each day.

--based on "I Do Not Pray" by James Madison Barr

So May We Be.

Preparation for CCUU Session: Can You Come Out and Play?

Summertime often brings back memories of childhood play: with siblings and friends in the neighborhood, at camp, at picnics or family reunions, and so on. We invite you to remember what playing meant to you, and how it helped you grow. And we invite you to think about the role of play in your adult life—how you like to “play” now and what that says about you.

Food for Thought

Choose any of the preparation questions that appeal to you, or find another aspect of play to share.

1. Think of a time in your life when you were really having FUN. What were you doing? What were you feeling? Can you tell that story?
2. What were your favorite ways to play as a child? What made them interesting and exciting?
3. How do you "play" as an adult? Why do you value this kind of play?
4. Compare your childhood play to recreation you enjoy as an adult. Do the differences or similarities indicate anything meaningful about you and your life?

If you want to, try “show and tell.” Bring a picture, memento, drawing, example of a hobby, or some interesting recreational equipment to share that reflects your ways of playing in the past or present.

Meditation Readings

“Play is the exultation of the possible.”

- Martin Buber

“It is a happy talent to know how to play.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Men do not quit playing because they grow old; they grow old because they quit playing.”

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

Adapted from “Bored Silly” by David S. Blanchard

Did you know that July is National Hot Dog Month? It is. It is also (among many other national celebrations slated for July), National Anti-Boredom month. I intend to omit that festival from my July. I think July is a wonderful time to be bored.

In spite of what they hold as true at The Boring Institute of Maplewood, New Jersey, summertime is the ideal season for boredom. Some people call it vacation. I think being bored is an undervalued state of mind. Obviously, it's not a place one wants to stay all the time, but only when you're bored do you let yourself fully pay attention. When you're a kid that's when you lie on the ground and watch the industry of ants, or look for shapes in the clouds, or find four leaf clovers, or make up a game with whoever's hanging around. Later on in life, it's when, well, it's when you do the same sort of stuff. But while you're watching the ants or scouring the skies, you're also imagining all kinds of other things, making connections, sorting out your life, sensing the patterns that give your life shape. That doesn't happen when you're in a hurry. It doesn't happen when every day has a full agenda. Those things rarely happen when you want to make them happen.

Boredom is one of those gifts life gives us that we often think we'd just as soon do without, and it would surely be a curse if it was unrelieved. But for most of us, it's a temporary state of grace that we visit from time to time, temporarily without our bearings, when we discover all the ways we human creatures are made for wonder.

As summer arrives, I anticipate a good boring July. This is our opportunity for authentic boredom. After all, everyone knows August is National Canning Month, so you know you'll be busy then.

SCM, Countryside UU, 6/06, adapted from The First Unitarian Church of San Jose