

GAMES

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY, October 2013

Rev. Margie Allen and Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson

Facilitators: Important! Before your group meets, please ask the participants to bring with them a game or some representation or picture of a game such as a board game piece or deck of cards, crossword puzzle, scrabble tile, iPhone, etc. You will not be playing any of the games, but as in “show and tell” each person will be offered the opportunity to talk about a game that has been significant in his/her life. Please ask participants to come prepared to share with others in the circle about why this particular game is meaningful to them.

Opening words: *The Gambler* (sung by Kenny Rogers)

Either play a video of the song on You Tube (look up Kenny Rogers The Gambler)

Or play the song (CD provided)

Chalice lighting and silence

Covenant (optional)

Check-in

Topic Introduction

For millennia human beings have played games. We play them individually, or with one or more people, or with teams. We play them with animals. Games fall into many categories: video (computer, arcade), sports, tabletop (card, board, etc), alternate reality, role-playing (house, war, etc), lawn, party, educational, word and puzzle, street and playground games, and more. In her book “Reality Is Broken,” Jane McGonigal argues that play is possibly the best, healthiest, most productive activity a human can undertake — a gateway to our ideal psychological state. People play games for entertainment, companionship, challenge, accomplishment, for the encounters with chance or luck. There is research showing that playing games helps to keep our minds sharp.

Games aren’t an escape from reality, McGonigal contends, they are an optimal form of engaging it. Games have goals, structure, obstacles to overcome and we get continuous feedback on how we are doing. In fact, she says, if we could just find a way to impose game mechanics on top of everyday life, humans would be infinitely better off. We might even use these approaches to help solve real-world problems like obesity, education and government abuse. Some proponents point to successful examples of games applied to everyday life: Weight Watchers and frequent-flier miles, for example. At the same time games have their down sides. We can have bad or unpleasant experiences with them. They can consume too much of our time and even become addictive. They can become our reality. Playing games can become problematic in itself.

In this session we will take a look at the role games have played in our lives.

Quotations

Activity -- The Nonverbal Birthday Line-up Game

(Facilitators-- This is a cooperative game. Please give out only these directions. "Without talking, line yourselves up according to the month and day you were born. The idea is to have us all in a line from January to December and to do it without talking.")

The participants themselves must figure out how they can communicate without words and where they should start and end the line. It doesn't matter if everyone is not placed perfectly in line. The point of the game is to work together.

When everyone is lined up,

--ask each person to share the month and day they were born.

--Ask the group what it was like to try and create the line together with no words.

--What was it like to play a game in which there were no winners or losers?)

Questions for group reflection

1. Share with the rest of the group the game sample you brought. Why has it been significant in your life? What do you like best about playing games? What do you like least?
2. What were your experiences with games as a child? Share a good or a bad one.
3. What kinds of games do you play now? Who do you play with? Do you like games you play by yourself, with others, in teams?
4. What kind of a game player are you? Would you call yourself competitive, strategic, impulsive? Are these characteristics true of you generally, or only in game situations? Can you think of any examples?
5. How do you feel when you win at games? How do you feel when you lose? Is it easy for you to join games that are new or difficult for you? Why or why not?
6. Some people refer to general activities in life as a game. For example, politics, negotiation and relationships are each at times referred to as a "game". In your life do you or those around you treat common activities as a "game"? How does the "gameness" of the situation change the character of your experience? How does the experience of "winning" play out in your life?
7. What role have games played in your life?

Likes and wishes

Closing words and Chalice extinguishing

The ability to be playful rests less in the objects that surround us than in the quality of the spirit within us. Playfulness is a potential within us that allows us to recapture the lightness of our being and the spirit of the child. Playfulness is not to be confused with the donning of rose-colored glasses, a defense against the sorrowful side of life. Indeed, it can be said that only those who can laugh with all their being are also those whose tears are most real. Playfulness is an ability to see the heights of the depths of life. (Author unknown)

Quotations

Life is more fun if you play games.” — Roald Dahl

“How dreadful...to be caught up in a game and have no idea of the rules.” — Caroline Stevermer

“The worst thing a kid can say about homework is that it is too hard. The worst thing a kid can say about a game is it's too easy.” — Henry Jenkins

**“We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing!”
— Benjamin Franklin**

“Games give you a chance to excel, and if you're playing in good company you don't even mind if you lose because you had the enjoyment of the company during the course of the game.” ----- Gary Gygax

All reality is a game. Physics at its most fundamental, the very fabric of our universe, results directly from the interaction of certain fairly simple rules, and chance; the same description may be applied to the best, most elegant and both intellectually and aesthetically satisfying games. ----- Iain Banks

“Life is like Tetris; if it doesn't fit, just flip it over” ----- Sabine Hein

“In the game of life, we all receive a set of variables and limitations in the field of play. We can either focus on the lack thereof or empower ourselves to create better realities with the pieces we play the game with.” ----- T.F. Hodge

It may be that all games are silly. But then, so are humans. ” — Robert Lynd

“Every game is winnable if you change your mind about what the prize should be and your perspective about the players at the table.” ----- Shannon Alder

I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed. ----- Michael Jordan

Baseball, it is said, is only a game. True. And the Grand Canyon is only a hole in Arizona. Not all holes, or games, are created equal. ----- George Will

Video games are bad for you? That's what they said about rock-n-roll. ----- Shigeru Miyamoto