

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry  
**Happiness**  
First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, December 2018)

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting**

Warmth, Joy, Togetherness

Out of the darkness, light.  
Out of the light, warmth.  
Out of the warmth, joy.  
Out of the joy, togetherness.  
May this flame hold us  
for the time we are here with one another.  
- *Ben Soule*

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is the time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share.

**Topic: Happiness**

Happiness comes from within. Or does it? External factors such as social conditions, our family's health and circumstances, relationships, the weather, work pressure, and many more can affect our state of mind and, ultimately, our happiness. During the holiday season, we are conditioned to believe that we *should* be happy, but this season can often overwhelm and exacerbate feelings of anxiety, grief, or unhappiness. Is happiness a state of mind, something we can conjure up through will power, something more amorphous that comes and goes like the tides, or something out of reach because of life experience or circumstances? While we may all seek happiness, let us be present in our feelings as we honor when and why it may not be within our reach.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." - *Declaration of Independence*

"Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude." - *Denis Waitley*

"Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." - *Buddha*

“Money is numbers and numbers never end. If it takes money to be happy, your search for happiness will never end.” - *Bob Marley*

“People shoot for happiness but feel formed by suffering.” - *David Brooks*

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” - *Dalai Lama*

“Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself.” - *Og Mandino*

“You cannot protect yourself from sadness without protecting yourself from happiness.”  
- *Jonathan Safran Foer*

“I am more and more convinced that our happiness or unhappiness depends far more on the way we meet the events of life, than on the nature of those events themselves.”  
- *Baron Alexander von Humboldt*

“Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come  
Whispering ‘it will be happier’ ...” - *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

### **Possible Questions for Discussion:**

- What situations or events lead me to happiness? To unhappiness?
- What role do I play in my own happiness?
- How do other emotions contribute to happiness for me?
- Can I share a moment of happiness from my past?
- What interferes with my happiness?
- Has what makes me happy changed over time?
- How do different seasons influence my happiness?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

**Wrapping Up:** How did you like this topic and session?

### **Closing Words**

“Life is short. Smile while you have teeth.” - *Mallory Hopkins*