



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO COMMUNITY SCIENCE

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- An important unit in human community is the family.
- Unitarian Universalism celebrates and affirms many different types of families.
- Love is what bonds a group of people together as a family.

Lesson Materials

- TV/VCR and "Animal Atlas: Family Time"
- Copy of *And Tango Makes Three*
- Six wooden or Lego blocks: 2 red, 2 green and 1 blue (or any three colors)
- Over-sized copies of Permutation Chart for each workshop session
- Plastic dolls (manipulatives) of family members, multicultural and of differing physical abilities
- Laminated labels for adding descriptors to dolls ('adoptive', 'step', 'biological', half, etc.)

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

A child and parent were walking along a road when they came across a large stone. The child said to the parent, "Do you think if I use all my strength, I can move this rock?" The parent answered, "If you use all your strength, I am sure you can do it." The child began to push the rock with every ounce of energy available. The child pushed and pushed, but the rock did not move. Discouraged, the little one said to the parent, "You were wrong. I can't do it." The parent placed an arm around the child's shoulder and said, "No, love. You didn't use all your strength – you didn't ask me to help."

- adapted from D. Wolpe's

Teaching Your Children About God

The family. We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together.

-Erma Bombeck

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.

-Desmond Tutu

Family life is full of major and minor crises ~ the ups and downs of health, success and failure in career, marriage, and divorce ~ and all kinds of characters. It is tied to places and events and histories. With all of these felt details, life etches itself into memory and personality. It's difficult to imagine anything more nourishing to the soul.

- Thomas Moore

**YOUR FIELD
EXPERIENCES:
FEEDBACK AND
NOTES**

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 2-3 minutes

Lots of animals live in groups. Do you know what we call whole groups of the following animals? Guess!? What do you call a group of...

- Cows (herd)
- Geese (flock)
- Fish (school)
- Wolves (pack)
- Lions (pride)
- Killer whales (pod)
- Ants (colony)

And they get weirder...

- Squirrels (scurry)
- Porcupines (prickle)
- Coyotes (band)
- Peacocks (ostentation)
- Ravens (unkindness)

What groups do people come in? Families? Congregations? Neighborhoods? Nations? Which do you think is most important to belong to?

Many people think of family as the basic group that people need most. So we could say 'geese come in flocks', 'coyotes come in bands' and 'people come in families'. UUs affirm and celebrate all kinds of families.

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
ANIMAL ATLAS: FAMILY TIME**

🕒 15-20 minutes

Let's talk about an animal family to start. We'll watch a couple of short clips from a documentary about animal families. The times of the clips will be marked on your DVD player so that you can advance using the remote control.

After the clips, invite the children to discuss the following questions:

- What did the animal families do that was like the way human families are?
- What did the animal families do that was different from the way human families are?
- to do.

- Do all animal families have two animal parents?
- Do you believe that the animal families love each other? If not, what else might they feel that makes them care for their families?
- What are some things that make your family feel close?
- How do scientists find out more about animal families?
- How do we find out more about human families?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO PERMUTATIONS! (MILLIONS OF POSSIBLE FAMILIES)

🕒 20-25 minutes

A permutation is one of a set of possible combinations, or a way to put things together. We can do some easy permutations with these three colored blocks. If I had to figure out how many different ways I could show a block or blocks on this tray, how many combinations could we think of...? First we could have just one block. Then two blocks in pairs. How many different pairs are there?

Families come in lots of possible combinations – or permutations – too! Some people think that pretty much the only ‘right’ permutation looks like this: mom, dad, child, child. Unitarian Universalists recognize all the different combinations of people who come together to love each other and be a family. We think that the only ‘rule’ that applies to permutations of families is LOVE.

How many different permutations of the human family are there?! Let’s explore some!

- A set of multicultural, multigenerational figures plus laminated “spotlight” mats that say “ADOPTIVE”, “STEP-”, “FOSTER” and “BIOLOGICAL” will be available for the kids to use as manipulatives in creating their families. Note that the nomenclature that kids use will often be from a child’s perspective of different family members, but encourage kids to point out other kinship ties (the word *brother* will be used more often than *son*, so take a second to point out that a boy can be both brother and son). To add the adjectives that describe families, place the doll on the spotlight mat.
- We’ll create a permutation using the manipulatives (dolls), explaining who’s who as we go. We’ll record the details of each permutation on our chart using numbers.
- If you’d like to add a positive, competitive incentive to the activity, the class can race against the clock (How many permutations can we think of in 15 minutes?) or divide into teams and race against each other (Which team can think of 30 different permutations of the family fastest?). For fun, we’ll keep a weekly Best Scores tally on the door (everyone’s scores will be included in Best Scores).
- First and second graders can use the manipulatives to create their families and then report the number of family members to the Workshop Leader and/or Journey Guide, who will record it on the tally sheet.
- Third through sixth graders, given an example or two, can likely transfer their own permutations to the tally sheet.
- The families should be *realistic* (8 stepfathers and one child is probably not the most realistic family) but we must remain open to many different types of families (three foster brothers may be a family unto themselves).
- The activity does not need to be competitive. You can randomize it by having the kids draw 2, 3 or 4 dolls out of a bag and describe their relationship. The class can simply set a goal and work to achieve it.

Examples of Possible Families:

- 1 Biological Dad, 1 Stepmom, 1 Biological Brother, 1 Biological Sister
- 2 Moms, 1 Adopted Brother (Son or Grandson), 1 Biological Brother (Son or Grandson)
- 1 Mom, 2 Daughters
- 1 Grandma, 1 Grandpa, 1 Grandchild

That's four different permutations of family already. How many more might there be?

NOTE:

- You may need to check and supplement the kids' understanding of the ideas of *biological children*, *foster children*, *half siblings* and some other intricacies of human families. Gently encourage children to share details about their own families that might clarify relationships. It may not be necessary to include these descriptors in every permutation, especially when working with younger groups.

Wondering Together

- I wonder how many possible permutations of families there are in the universe?
- I wonder which permutation represents your family?
- Can a kid be part of more than one of these possible families? What happens when parents divorce and re-marry?
- I wonder what all of these different families have in common?
- I wonder what we could say to someone who decided that one of the families on our tally sheet didn't count as a family?
- Are there other family members that should be on this chart to make our permutations even more inclusive of real families?
- Do you need a grown-up in the permutation for it to be a family? Why do you agree or disagree?
- How can our church show that we welcome and celebrate all families?
- How can our church help families take care of themselves and each other?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, assume a comfortable meditative position or take each other's hands. Speak these words, or words like them, the children repeating each line after you, the teacher.

May all families grow strong,
May our church be a place that welcomes all families
May all families grow strong.

	Adoptive Mom	Adoptive Dad	Biological Mom	Biological Dad	Foster Mom	Foster Dad	Stepmom	Stepdad	Brother	Sister	Stepbrother	Stepsister	Half Brother	Half Sister	Foster Brother	Foster Sister	Grandma	Grandpa	Aunt	Uncle	Cousin	Friend	
1.																							
2.																							
3.																							
4.																							
5.																							
6.																							
7.																							
8.																							
9.																							
10.																							
11.																							
12.																							
13.																							
14.																							
15.																							
16.																							
17.																							
18.																							
19.																							
20.																							
21.																							
22.																							
23.																							
24.																							
25.																							
26.																							
27.																							
28.																							
29.																							
30.																							