

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

COMMUNITY KINESTHETIC

This lesson's Big Ideas:

'One of our Unitarian Universalist principles encourages us to think of spiritual friendship as "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth"

Being a friend is a religious act; it is living out our love. To have a friend and be a friend takes time, patience and effort. Strong friendships are based on commitment, respect, listening, trust and celebration of differences.

There are many examples of rich spiritual friendships to inspire and guide us in choosing and keeping friends. These stories teach us that we can and should be friends with people who are different from us.

Lesson Materials

- Blindfolds
- Small obstacles for an obstacle course: boxes, cups, aerobic steps, ropes, etc.

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

"And a youth said, Speak to us of Friendship.

And he answered, saying:

Your friend is your needs answered.

He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.

And he is your board and your fireside.

For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.

When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the "nay" in your own mind, nor do you withhold the "ay".

And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;

For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unclaimed.

When you part from your friend, you grieve not;

For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.

And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.

For love that seeks aught but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is caught.

And let your best be for your friend.

If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know the flood also.

For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?

Seek him always with hours to live.

For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.

And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.

For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed."

-from *The Prophet*, by Khalil Gibran

- In preparation, for this lesson, take some time to reflect on the gifts that friendship has brought into your life. What have your friendships asked of you? What qualities do you seek out in other people? What does spiritual companionship look like, in your experience?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5-10 minutes

In this session, we're going to talk about how important trust is in a meaningful friendship. Let's have a "stand up vote" to share a little about our friendships (sit down between each vote):

- Stand up if you have a best friend
- Stand up if your best friend is the same age as you
- Stand up if you've known your best friend for more than three years
- Stand up if your friend goes to a different church than you
- Stand up if you would trust your friend with a good secret
- Stand up if you would trust your friend to help you know right from wrong
- Stand up if you would trust your friend in an emergency
- Stand up if you like the things about your friend that are different from you

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
TRUST WALK**

🕒 15-20 minutes

This activity can take place within the confines of the classroom, or in a larger space, like the hallways of the church. We're going to take each other on a trust walk. We'll work in threes (or pairs, if your numbers are really low) and practice earning and feeling trust. One person at a time will be blindfolded. That person will trust the other two friends to guide him or her where we need to go without bumping into anything or taking a wrong turn.

Friends take trust seriously, so if there's anyone who doesn't take this activity seriously enough to take good care of their friends, we'd rather they sat on the sides and watched.

The blindfolded person is trusting the friends to make them feel safe, to tell them what the next steps are, to help and encourage them.

Teachers can set up a small obstacle course or set a nearby destination in the church that the entire class will reach together. Group students in threes (or pairs) and blindfold one trustee. Give the groups time to navigate the obstacle course or get to their destination. Switch partners for the reverse path on the obstacle course or the return trip to the classroom.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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Gather the group together for some discussion.

Wondering Together

- I wonder how you felt during this activity? Was it different when you were the truster as opposed to the trusted?
- I wonder how friends earn your trust?
- I wonder if you think of yourself as trustworthy? How do you know?
- I wonder if trust is the *most* important thing in a friendship, or if there are more important things?

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO
SECRET HANDSHAKE**

🕒 25-30 minutes

Friends often share good secrets. Good secrets are ones that don't hurt anyone or keep anyone from getting help when they need it. Sometimes, groups of friends think up a secret handshake to greet each other with, to remind them that they're close to each other.

Let's think up a secret handshake for our class. It should be interesting and complicated enough that folks can't guess it, but easy enough to remember next week. We'll use the democratic process—meaning we'll talk and decide together—because that's how Uus like to be in community with each other.

With the class, think up a handshake that takes 4 or 5 discrete steps. You can ask pairs of kids to invent one element to contribute. Share with the whole group and sequence them together. Once the group has mastered it, practice it carousel-style, in to concentric circles that stand face to face with the outside circle moving clockwise so that friends shift around and can try the handshake on lots of other classmates.

Wondering Together

- I wonder how we'll teach this handshake to friends who are absent?
- I wonder how it would feel if we didn't know someone else's handshake?
- I wonder what we should do if someone asks to be our friend and learn our secret handshake?
- I wonder who else at church you'd like to be friends with?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY THREE

TRUST FALLS

This activity is a two-person trust fall. We'll work in pairs and demonstrate first so that people can see how it works.

One person, the faller, stands with his or her eyes closed and arms folded across the chest. The catcher stands right behind the faller, with his or her legs in a braced position and arms up and ready to catch. We'll 'catch' the faller simply by placing our hands against his or her back and gently pushing against the fall. At first, the fall should only be a leaning back of a few degrees. The body should only move a few inches. This lets the faller get used to the sensation of the fall.

Remind the catcher that he or she will be the faller in a few minutes, so earning the faller's trust is very important and will have immediate benefits.

We'll prepare ourselves for the trust fall with a short conversation, as in belaying a rock climber. Practice this conversation a few times before allowing the pairs of catchers and fallers to engage in the activity.

Faller: Ready to catch?

Catcher: Ready and waiting.

Faller: Falling!

Catcher: I've got you!

As the teacher, decide whether it's best to have each pair take a turn doing this trust fall while the rest of the class watches on (this increases the accountability and may be more controlled in classes that are squirrely) or whether the whole group can try it at once. As each pair's comfort and trust increases, invite them to try longer falls (of an inch or two each time). Remind the kids that the other person's safety is in their hands.

Wondering Together

- I wonder how this felt as the catcher? I wonder how this felt as a faller?
- I wonder if you trust your partner more now than you did at the beginning?
- I wonder how friends learn to trust each other? Why do we say that we EARN trust?
- I wonder what would happen if the catcher let you fall? Would you trust them again? How could they earn your trust back?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words:

May we be blessed with good friends

May we be good friends ourselves

May our friendships help us to grow and change

May we be grateful for the blessing of friendship.

Invite the children to speak the names of good friends out loud before or after this blessing.