

# JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

## ON BEING HUMAN BODY

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Being human means having a capacity to speak and do both good and evil things and plenty of things in-between.
- Good and evil aren't forces that can exist in a vacuum. They are consequences of our actions which are influenced by many factors in our lives. We have to live with the consequences of all our actions, both good and evil and everywhere in between.
- Unitarian Universalists commit themselves to discerning good from evil using our own hearts and minds, to affirming the inherent worth and dignity of all, and to standing on the side of goodness.

### TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Even on this small stage we have our two sides, and something might be done by throwing all one's weight on the scale of breadth, tolerance, charity, temperance, peace, and kindness to man and beast. We can't all strike very big blows, and even the little ones count for something.

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"Are there, infinitely varying with each individual, inbred forces of Good and Evil in all of us, deep down below the reach of mortal encouragement and mortal repression - hidden Good and hidden Evil, both alike at the mercy of the liberating opportunity and the sufficient temptation?"

- Wilkie Collins

"The forces that tend for evil are great and terrible, but the forces of truth and love and courage and honesty and generosity and sympathy are also stronger than ever before."

"War with evil; but show no spirit of malignity toward the man who may be responsible for the evil. Put it out of his power to do wrong."

- Theodore Roosevelt

"It is a man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways."

- Siddhartha Buddha

"Men do not differ much about what things they will call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable."

- GK Chesterton

"All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing."

- Edmund Burke

**Reflect** on your own perspective on good and evil. What has your life taught you about human nature? Do any of the above ideas conflict with or reflect your own beliefs? As a Unitarian Universalist, what is your relationship to these forces, to the struggle between them, both within and without?

## LESSON MATERIALS

Materials below multiplied by the number of children participating in the workshop:

- **WE'LL GET YOU THIS LIST, BUT IT WILL LOOK SOME-THING LIKE THIS...**
- Ziploc bag or plastic container
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrush
- Soap
- Washcloth
- Piece of Paper
- Envelope
- Etc...

## YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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## GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5 minutes or less

Invite the kids to do a quick check-in around how they're feeling today: two thumbs up or two down or maybe one thumb up and one down?

## PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

🕒 15-20 minutes

American Sign Language is an elegant language that embodies ideas, including complicated, abstract ideas like “good” and “evil”. The origins and expressions of each sign can tell entire stories about being human.

Today, we'll learn a handful of sign pairs, one a positive idea and the opposite a negative idea. Teach the sign by modeling it twice and then inviting the class to repeat it. Encourage them to wonder about how that sign came to be the symbol of that word. Are the actions representing something about that idea?

After you've taught four signs, see if the children can remember them and distinguish between the four. If they feel confident, move on and teach the next four or so and repeat the learning check. You can play “opposites”, too, where you or another child signs a concept and the class signs back the opposite idea.

The next activity, Helping Hands, will take half an hour, so try to keep this ASL activity to 20 minutes maximum.

If you happen to have extra time at the end of the class (after the Helping Hands activity), you can also play a game where you sign a word and an individual child or the entire class can try to sign its opposite.

## PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO HELPING HANDS PROJECT

🕒 25-30 minutes

We'll use our hands to live out our Unitarian Universalist values around kindness and social justice. The project below will allow kids to make transition kits for recently released prisoners in your community. This will provide us with an opportunity to discuss consequences, inherent worth and dignity and social action. If the church has a current project

**TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON**

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that can replace this activity, by all means, do something connected to the life of the church.

Be sure to provide plenty of context for this activity, sharing about the neighbors who might benefit from our helping hands and how we, too, in our lives might need a helping hand.

When people commit acts that our communities feel are unkind, unfair or even evil, the consequence is often a period of time in prison. Prison is a very difficult place to live and an even more difficult place to hold on to your faith in one's own inherent worth and dignity. One of the challenges in our justice system is a real lack of planning for what happens when prisoners have completed their time and are released. Sometimes the former prisoners have learned new job skills in prison, but most often they don't know what kind of work they can do in their new life. Often, former prisoners aren't even sure where they will live. Most of the time, the people are just taken to the outside of the prison and given their papers and told to go. They don't even get things like toothpaste or soap.

Because we Unitarian Universalists believe that everyone is worthy of love and hope, we choose to help even people who have done things that are unkind, unfair or even evil. Our love and care can help our neighbors remember their own inherent worth and dignity. Each person is important and can make a difference for good in the world. In our class today, we'll help recently released prisoners get a better start by making them a care package of things that they might need. We'll include a note or drawing that reminds them of their capacity for good and of their importance in the world.

We'll work individually or in teams of two kids. Show the kids the supplies and invite them to decide together on the best way to take turns, get the materials and finish the care packages. Each kit will need :

- (This list is an example...real list will be in the classroom)
- One bag or plastic container
- One toothbrush
- One tube of toothpaste
- One bar of soap
- One washcloth
- One letter or drawing expressing hope and care

If 5th and 6th graders precede the younger classes in this workshop, the older kids can also do some additional letter writing or can brainstorm ideas for letters and write them on the board or on flipcharts. Just another way to be kind and helpful in a world that needs us to do good things for each other...

## Wondering Together

As you do the work of creating these kits or during the clean-up, you can share a discussion using these questions as prompts:

- I wonder if humans are more likely to do good or evil, in general?
- If we believe that all people can choose good, why do some people end up doing evil (unkind, unfair, mean, hurtful) things?
- I wonder if prison is the best consequence for people who have done things that are very unkind, unfair or even evil?
- I wonder if people in prison are mostly *similar* to us here in class or mostly *different* from us here in class?
- I wonder if a person who does something evil can still do something good?
- I wonder what a released prisoner might do that creates goodness in the world? I wonder what kind of help he or she might need?
- I wonder if *anyone* could maybe end up in prison someday because he or she did something unkind, unfair or even evil? Could I, your teacher, be put in prison? Do you know anyone who could *never* do something unkind or unfair or evil enough to be put in prison?

Collect the assembled kits together in an orderly way. Inform the kids that these will be taken to our community's prisons by members of our church's Restorative Justice team, a group of people who think and talk and then act on fair ways to help people who have been in prison become members of their communities again.

## **CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words responsively, teacher beginning and children responding:

Inside us all is a seed of hate and a seed of love

*I will water the seed of love.*

Inside us all is a seed of anger and a seed of calm

*I will water the seed of calm*

Inside us all is a seed of violence and a seed of peace

*I will water the seed of peace*

Inside us all is a seed of evil and a seed of good

*I will water the seed of good*

- inspired by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh

# GOOD

Make the sign for "good" by placing the fingers of your right hand against your lips. Move your right hand into the palm of your left hand. Both hands should be facing upward. **Note:** Often this sign is done **without** the left hand. When signed with the right hand only, this sign can mean, "thank you".



# BAD

Note: The sign for "BAD" is very similar to "GOOD" except there is a reversal of orientation for negation-- which means that by twisting the palm-side of the hand so that it points down (instead of up--as in the sign for good) it now means the opposite of good. You also change your facial expression to match your meaning. Generally this is a frown or scowl when signing "BAD."

Make the sign for "BAD" by placing the fingers of your right hand against your lips.

Move your hand down and away.

Your palm will now be facing downward.



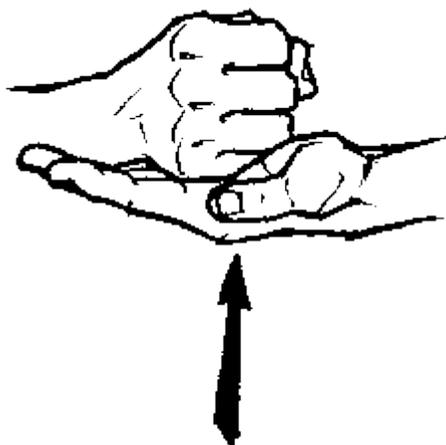
# HELP

The sign for "help" is made by closing your right hand.

Place your right hand on the outstretched palm of your left hand.

Raise both hands.

Note: Many people make this sign by placing the left "s" or "a" hand on the right "b" palm.



Note: This sign is [directional](#).

If you start it near yourself and move it toward someone else in and up, forward, then down arch it means "I will help you" or "I helped you" or (if you do it with raised eyebrows) "Do you want me to help you?" You don't need separate signs for "ME" and "YOU."

"you-HELP-me"

If you start the sign near the other person and bring it toward yourself it means: "You help me." If you do it with raised eyebrows, "Will you help me?"

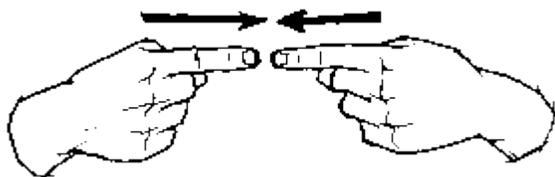
"he-HELP-me"

If you are talking to someone in front of you and start the sign off to the right of you and bring it nearer to you it means, "he-HELP-me."

# HURT

The sign for "hurt" is made by extending the index fingers of both hands. Bring the fingers toward each other twice using a jabbing movement. A variation of this sign is to do a **twisting movement** as you bring the tips of the index fingers toward each other. The right hand twists one way and the left hand twists the other.

Note: Both versions of the sign for "HURT / PAIN" can be done on or near the part of the body that is feeling pain. For example if you have a toothache, you can indicate that in one sign by doing the sign "hurt" near the side of your jaw. If you have a headache, you can indicate it by signing "hurt" near your forehead.



# *STEAL*

Holding the left arm against the chest, draw the right hand (two-fingered “N” gesture) from the left elbow to the end of the left hand.

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STEAL:



## SHARE

Hold the left hand out at chest level, fingers together and thumb up.  
Move the right hand (fingers together, thumb up) back and forth  
along the index finger of the left hand, in a sweeping motion,  
as though dividing something and pushing the two halves apart.



# *Destroy*

Right hand begins palm down, left begins palm up.  
Pass open hands, right over left at chest level. Return hands to  
starting position, changing from open hands to closed fist.

Imagine tearing something in two.  
Negative facial expressions help.

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destroy:



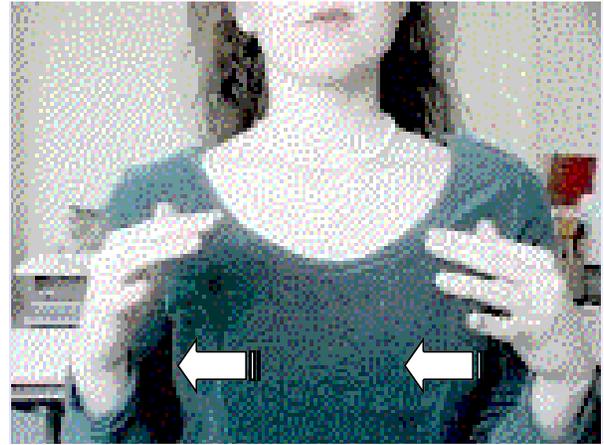
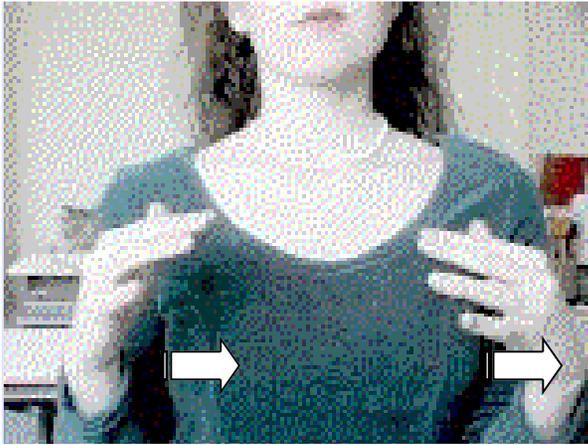
## FIX

Using flattened “O” hands (fingertips together touching thumb), brush fingertips together, passing hands up and down, (three passes) as if fixing something. Start and end with right hand lower than left hand.



# WAR

Hold both hands at chest level,  
four fingers bent in at the first knuckle.  
Wiggling fingers, move both hands back and forth together  
like advancing and retreating armies.



# Peace

You can use the sign "PEACE" to convey the idea of "serenity." This sign would be my first choice.

You place the hands together as if signing the concept "BECOME." Then you twist the hands once and smoothly bring them apart, down, and toward your sides.



# LOVE

The sign for "love" is made by crossing both hands over your heart.  
(Middle of your chest.) Your hands may be closed or open, but the palm side  
should face toward you.



# HATE

Begin with hands at chest level, fingers pointed away from the body. Touch the middle fingers of each hand to the pad of the respective thumb. “Flick” the finger outward and away from the body, ending in “five” hands with fingers pointing away from the body. A negative facial expression adds to the meaning.

