



# Becoming

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## Welcome to Becoming A Guide for Facilitators

A Soul Matters  
Coming of Age Program

# CONTENTS

[Welcome](#) [Page 2](#)

[Unique Elements](#) [Page 3](#)

1. Facilitator Notes & Suggested Scripts
2. The Three Dimensions of the Spiritual Life
3. The Big Questions
4. Our Take on Journals
5. Our Take on Elder Engagement
6. Our Take on the End-of-Year Service
7. Our Take on End-of-Year Personal Faith Statements
8. Justice Engagement
9. Many Sessions to Choose From
10. Program Flow

# Welcome

Welcome to the journey of *Becoming*!

*Becoming* joins a long line of UU coming of age (COA) programs. Like other COA programs, *Becoming* focuses on helping early age youth identify their guiding values and unique spiritual beliefs. *Becoming* also has a number of unique elements, which we focus on in this guide.

But before we jump into that, we want to say thanks. You are offering your youth a great gift. It's an understatement to say that navigating one's teenage years is challenging. There are so many voices and values vying for teens' attention. By helping your youth identify their own guiding principles and virtues, you better enable them to be creators of their story, not simply a character written by forces not of one's own making.

You are also giving your youth a lifeline to our faith. Too many young adults drift away from participation in our UU congregations. But we know those who leave with a clear understanding of their personal UU identity make their way back home. So, you are not just passing on UU values; you are offering youth a path home.

Finally, we also hope this journey is a gift to you. Like our youth, you too are being offered an opportunity to deepen your faith. So, as you guide and support your youth, may you also be blessed with new spiritual perspectives and insights. As you help the youth engage in spiritual practice, may your own spiritual life grow as well.

Thanks for making this path available to your youth. And thanks for allowing us to be your partners.

## ***April and Scott, Co-Authors***

*April Rosario, Director of Early Youth Resources*  
*Rev. Scott Tayler, Team Lead*

# Introducing Our Unique Elements

## 1. Facilitator Notes & Suggested Scripts

To support you as a leader, we weave facilitator notes throughout the session guides. For instance, at the beginning of each session, we include session preparation tips and a list of needed materials. Additionally, we include suggested scripts and talking points throughout. And to ensure you are well-grounded in the topics, we include recommended background material when needed.

## 2. The Three Dimensions of the Spiritual Life

Becoming is built around a particular framing of the spiritual life, inspired by the work being done at the [Sacred Design Lab](#). This frame views the spiritual life as made up of three dimensions and accompanying questions:

- Belonging – To whom or what do I belong?
- Becoming – Who am I becoming?
- Beyond – What is beyond me?

All of our weekly sessions fall under these three categories or spheres.

We love the way these three spheres form a natural progression and frame the journey of the program. First, youth explore how they are shaped by their current communities of *belonging*. With that under their belt, they then explore *becoming* and the work of differentiation, asking themselves which influences from their communities of belonging they want to take with them and leave behind. Then, having established a more solid sense of who they want to become, there is room to turn to the wider questions about the world *beyond* oneself.

Finally, we find it helpful to explain this three-part spiritual frame using metaphors from the natural world. Questions of *belonging* can be thought of as the roots of a tree, representing all the ways our communities of influence nourish and push us to grow. Questions of *becoming* are the budding branches of the tree, capturing the blooming of our potential selves. And last, the questions about what is beyond are represented by the starry sky, filled with the wonders and mysteries of what is larger than us. It's such a rich way to explain the program: First we explore our roots. Then we turn to our budding branches. And finally together we ponder the stars and the expansive sky above us.

### 3. The Big Questions

Within these three general areas of the spiritual life, we invite youth to wrestle with more specific questions as they shape their personal religious identity. Every weekly session plan is designed around one of these “big questions.”

For instance, under *Belonging* we invite youth to ask themselves such questions as “How has my family shaped the way I view the world?” “What cultural privileges belong to me? And how do I unknowingly belong to them?” and “How do I resist exclusion and support the belonging of others?”

Some questions related to *Becoming* involve asking “How do I bravely honor my true self?” “What does it mean to live with authenticity and integrity?” and “Which parts from my upbringing do I want to hold onto and let go of?”

Some questions related to the *Beyond* involve asking “What is my relationship to the sacred?” “Is life random, indifferent, trustworthy, loving, dependable, threatening, cruel, good?” and “What are my responsibilities to needs greater than my own?”

### 4. More Than a Journal

Journals are used in coming-of-age programs to capture participants’ thoughts in one place so they can later reflect on the whole of their COA experience. Viewing everything at a glance also helps youth construct their end of year faith statements.

*Becoming* wholeheartedly supports the approach of collecting one’s thoughts. However, instead of relying on a single journal, we employ a number of collecting strategies. Those include:

1. A First & Final Thoughts Journal: We employ a modified journal approach that utilizes short answer prompts, fill in the blanks and first thought questions. We also encourage written and drawn responses. This eliminates the often-dreaded journaling homework and allows youth to sift through their insights easily. We encourage you to have youth keep their journals in your meeting space, so they are always available when you need them.
2. A Quote Pile & Wall: As a centering practice, we frequently present youth with handful of quotes typed on small strips of paper and then have youth pick the quote they most resonate with. These quotes speak to the session topic and allow youth to identify their first thoughts on the topic. We also invite youth to write the quote they picked in their journal and visually enhance it if they want. Finally, we ask youth to tape or save their quote choices on under their name on a large poster board “wall” that is kept in their youth space throughout the year. Each session, the youth add another quote under their name, allowing them at the end of the year to have an entire list of quotes that represent the many parts of themselves.

3. A Becoming “Soul Work” Table or Box: When activities end with the creation of a concrete object, we invite youth to keep those objects on a table or in a box in their meeting space. This allows youth to watch these expressions of themselves “pile up.” It also provides a way for youth to notice meaningful connections between their creations/projects. While we refer to these as soul work tables and soul work boxes, you are obviously welcome to come up with your own name.

4. Optional Leader Scrap Book Gift: We encourage adult leaders to take pictures (with permission) of the youth throughout the year while they are engaged in their discussions, activities and off-site adventures. Then as an end-of-year gift to all of the youth, you can put those pictures into a digital slideshow or album. These pictures can also be used as a slideshow during the final end-of-year worship service.

## 5. Engaging Elders and Adults

In the past, coming of age programs often had a mentor component, with the goal of helping youth grow a *new* and trusting relationship with an adult. Safe congregations work has raised some concerns about this approach of unsupervised one-on-one relationship building. With this in mind, our program focuses less on one-on-ones and more on group engagement. So instead of pairing a youth up with an individual adult, we incorporate various fishbowl discussions and special guest interviews that allow youth to remain together as a group when engaging older adults. Additionally, when we do include one-on-one work, it takes the form of youth doing a one-time interview with an adult they already have a trusted relationship with.

## 6. Our End-of-Year Service

We tease out the details of our approach to end-of-year worship services in the two sessions guides that help youth prepare for the service. But here are some of the general principles and components upon which those planning sessions are built:

- Lots of time to prep and prepare, with multiple session plans to guide you through the process.
- Multi-media suggestions to bring the year’s session work to life in the worship service.
- Flexibility for youth to share whatever part of themselves they feel most comfortable with, i.e. not everyone has to do a part of worship or even share their faith statement.
- Suggestions for congregational blessings and gifts, including ideas for a blessing and gift given at the start of the COA journey not just the end.

## **7. Tailored End-of-Year Personal Faith Statements**

Faith statements take many forms: This I believe statements, personal missions, credos, north star statements. We believe that the format needs to match the uniqueness of each youth. So we leave the form of the personal faith statement up to each youth. Along the way, we introduce youth to examples of various faith statement formats, so they get a better sense of what structure fits their faith expression the best.

## **8. Justice Engagement Woven Throughout**

Instead of containing justice work in single sessions, we weave racial, class and environmental justice throughout the entire program. Our goal is to reinforce the idea that justice is part of every aspect of one's spirituality.

## **9. Many Sessions to Choose From**

We provide you with an abundance of session plans (over 20) so you can choose which sessions interest your youth the most. This variety also gives you the flexibility to run a weekly program, a once-a-month program or anywhere in between. Each session is designed for one hour, allowing you to hold single one-hour session each week or to combine sessions to hold longer 2- or 3-hour gatherings.

## **10. Program Flow**

Whether your COA group meets weekly, monthly or a mix of the two, here's our overarching program flow we've designed for. You are welcome to modify as needed.

- September: Orientation work
- October - March: Core session work, elder engagements, off-site adventures
- Early - Mid April: Credo development work
- Late April - Mid May: Worship service planning
- Second half of May or Early June: Youth celebration service



# Blessings for Your Journey!

There you go: some road markers for the journey ahead. All the best as you and your youth make that journey your own!



## Coming of Age Authors

**April Rosario, Director of Early Youth Resources**

**Rev. Scott Tayler, Team Lead**



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# Becoming

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## Orientation Session

(Getting Ready for the Journey)

A Soul Matters  
Coming of Age Program

# Contents

<b><i>Welcome to the Orientation Session!</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Getting Ready Reminders</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Session Agenda</i></b>	<b>4</b>
1. Chalice Lighting: A blessing for the journey	4
2. Welcome & Overview: Sharing the journey's road map	5
3. Icebreakers: Connecting with your fellow travelers	8
4. Quote Wall Ritual: Feelings about the journeying	9
5. Spectrum Exercise: Where our journeys begin	10
6. Listening Skills: Precious tools for the journey	11
7. Covenanting: Promises for the Journey	12
8. Food and Fun: Bonding as fellow travelers	14
9. Closing: Blessing Our Fellow Travelers	15
<b><i>Appendices</i></b>	<b>16</b>
Appendix A: Quote Strip Options: About the journey of life	16
Appendix B: Belief Spectrum Exercise	18
Appendix C: Listening Activities/Games	20

# Welcome to the Orientation Session!

Welcome leaders. Here are a few notes as you get ready to take your youth through this orientation session.

The purpose of this session is three-fold:

- To offer youth an overview of the Becoming COA program,
- To help the youth get to know each other and bond, and
- To have some fun!

We frequently use journey language throughout this orientation and the rest of the session guides. We encourage you to reinforce this when you present the activities to your youth. It's a great way to remind youth that *Becoming* isn't like a class where we are taught information and answers but instead an exploration where we explore, grow and discover what views and beliefs fit us best.

This session is designed to be a 2 ½ - 3-hour retreat-like experience, with the core activities taking around 2 hours and the food and fun section adding another 45 minutes to an hour. However, if a 3-hour retreat won't work in your setting, you could eliminate the food & fun section and do it as a 2-hour event. You could also split the material into two 1-1 ½ hour sessions. A natural breaking spot would be to end the first meeting with section 5 ("Spectrum Exercise: Where our journeys begin") and start the second meeting with section 6 ("Listening Skills: Precious tools for the journey").

You are also welcome to adapt the material as needed. We've designed the sections and activities to build off each other, but at the same time you can think of the session sections as Lego pieces that you can add to, delete, or move around in any way that helps you build the most meaningful experience for your youth.

Last but not least we want you to know how much joy went into building this orientation session. It got us so excited about the journey youth will go on. We hope you not only feel that excitement but also find ways to express it to your youth throughout this session. After all, excitement is contagious. Yours will leak over into your youth. The best orientation session don't just tell us where we are going; they inspired us to want to get going.

Happy travels!

***April and Scott, Co-Authors***

*April Rosario, Director of Early Youth Resources*

*Rev. Scott Tayler, Team Lead*

# Getting Ready Reminders

## Materials to Gather

- **First and Final Thoughts Journals**

These journals would ideally have completely [blank covers and pages](#) so youth can decorate, doodle, and embellish them as much or as little as they like throughout the process. However to help make this a more accessible activity for those not artistically inclined we suggest offering stickers or collage materials for their decorations.

Leaders could also pre-print sheets of paper ([like this one](#)) with the session's question as the heading and the first and final thought prompts (write quote here, 3 thoughts about quote, Finish the sentence) below for youth to just fill in and embellish. These sheets could then be saved in a folder or binder as their First and Final Thoughts Journals

*\*Journal should be left at church so youth don't lose them or forget to bring them*

- **Poster board for the Quote Wall.**

This can be done as one poster board for each youth or as one extra-large poster board for the group with each youth's name at the top of a column

- **Sharpies, pens, markers, and/or colored pencils** for youth to doodle and draw in their journal
- **Tape or glue** for youth to apply their quote strips to their quote board/wall

## Prep & Set-Up To Do's

- Quote strip prep: Print out the quotes listed in Appendix A at the end of the packet. Print 2-3 copies so multiple youth can choose the same quote. Cut each page into strips so each quote is on its own strip. Spread them out on a table so youth can easily view and pick which one is theirs.
- Food and Fun set up as needed.

# Session Agenda

## 1. Chalice Lighting: A blessing for the journey

*Use this reading by John O'Donohue or one of your own. If using O'Donohue's piece, consider asking for six youth volunteers to each take a turn reading each stanza.*

### For the Traveler

John O'Donohue

Every time you leave home,  
Another road takes you  
into a world, you were never in.

New strangers on other paths await.  
New places that have never seen you  
will startle a little at your entry.  
Old places that know you well  
will pretend nothing  
changed since your last visit.

When you travel, you find yourself  
alone in a different way,  
more attentive now  
to the self you bring along...

When you travel,  
a new silence  
goes with you.  
And if you listen,  
you will hear  
what your heart would  
love to say.

A journey can become a sacred thing:  
Make sure, before you go,  
to take the time  
to bless your going forth,  
to free your heart of ballast  
so that the compass of your soul  
might direct you toward  
the territories of spirit,  
where you will discover  
more of your hidden life,  
and the urgencies  
that deserve to claim you.

May you travel in an awakened way,  
gathered wisely into your inner ground;  
That you may not waste the invitations  
which wait along the way to transform  
you...

## 2. Welcome & Overview: Sharing the journey's road map

*Below are the talking points we think are important to make, but feel free to alter or add as you see fit. Be sure to pause along the way for questions.*

### **Leader Prep**

- Consider reading over the Leaders Guide for more information about the below talking points.
- Read the talking points below and add or delete as you feel needed.

## **Suggested Talking Points**

- **Share excitement for the journey**

Personal excitement is contagious. So start off by welcoming everyone and then sharing one or two things that excite you most about the journey ahead. These can be parts of the curriculum you are especially looking forward to or some comments about why you think coming of age programs are so important. It's all about letting the youth know why you are grateful to be going on this adventure with them.

- **Briefly share the core purpose of Coming-of-Age programs**

Keep this short and sweet. Try to put the purpose into a simple sentence or two. Such as, "Coming of Age programs happen in all UU congregations. They are one of our faith's most important rites of passage. The purpose is to help youth deepen their faith, identify their guiding values and articulate their unique spiritual beliefs."

- **Stress that it's a journey**

Invite the youth to think of the program as a spiritual journey. Explain that viewing the months ahead as a journey reminds us that we don't have to have it all figured out ahead of time. This isn't like a class where we are learning or finding the "right answers." It's an exploration during which one discovers things about themselves and tries on various beliefs to figure out what feels right for them.

It's also helpful to stress that this is both an individual journey and a group journey. It's a solo journey in that youth are trying to know themselves better and everyone's experience will be unique to them. At the same time, as with any journey, we all need companions for support. Sharing our struggles and hearing everyone else's perspectives helps clarify our own.



- **Explain the unique components of the program**

Continue the journey metaphor and explain it always helps to have a road map and the lay of the land before venturing out. Briefly lift the key program elements or “road markers”:

- 1. The Three Dimensions of the Spiritual Life**

As mentioned in the Leader’s guide, *Becoming* is built around a particular framing of the spiritual life that views the spiritual life as made up of three dimensions and accompanying questions:

- Belonging - To whom or what do I belong?
- Becoming - Who am I becoming?
- Beyond - What is beyond me?

Tease out Belonging by emphasizing that before one can decide what they believe, it helps to reflect on the beliefs, values and ways of thinking that have been *passed on to you* by the current communities to which you belong, such as family, friends, one’s faith community and one’s culture. It helps to think about this as exploring one’s roots, as explained in the Leader’s Guide.

Tease out Becoming as the part of the journey where you evaluate what has been passed on to you and decide what you want to take with you and what you want to leave behind. This is the work of differentiation and owning your unique self. It’s helps to think of this as cultivating the branches of your tree and discovering the tools that will help you blossom in your unique way.

Finally, tease out Beyond as the time on the journey when pondering some of the bigger questions about life. Like “What is sacred, and do I believe in God?” and “Are human beings fundamentally good or bad?” and “What are my responsibilities to the world beyond myself?” It helps to think of this as stopping on the path and looking up to contemplate the stars.

If the nature metaphor of roots, branches and sky speaks to you, consider drawing those images as you explain the three dimensions of belonging, becoming and beyond.

- 2. Tools to Capture Your Thoughts**

This is a large and complex journey, with us considering many topics. It’s not easy to keep track of all the thoughts and experiences we have along the way. To help, explain the three ways we will document and capture the journey:

- **First & Final Thoughts Journal:** A simple journal in which youth will write up their first and final thoughts about each session. Now is a perfect time to hand out the journals you’ve selected to your youth.

- **A Quote Pile & Wall:** A “pile” of strips with quotes on them that relate to the topic of each session. As a starter exercise youth pick which quote best captures their “first thoughts” on the topic. They then write that quote in their journal and tape it on the Quote Wall/Poster Board under their name, allowing them at the end of the year to have an entire list of quotes that represent the many parts of themselves.
- **“Soul Work” Table or Box:** When activities end with the creation of a concrete object, youth keep those objects on a table or in a box in their meeting space, allowing them to watch these expressions of themselves “pile up” over the year.

### **3. Elders to Travel With**

To bond with and gain from the perspective of elders, there will be several special guest conversations with elders from the congregation as well as assignments to interview an adult youth already have a trusted relationship with.

### **4. Off-Site Adventures**

In addition to the topical sessions youth will explore through discussion and activities at church, there will be numerous special adventures that will take youth off site, such as ropes courses, faith-in-action projects and labyrinth walks.

### **5. Our End-of-Year Celebration Service & Credo Statement**

Every great journey should end with a party in which travelers celebrate their adventure and share how they’ve changed. That’s what the end-of-year worship service is all about. Recognizing their growth, youth are given the honor of designing and leading the service. In particular, youth are invited to offer their Credo statement, a central ritual and rite of passage for all UU coming of age youth. This is also a good moment to explain that youth will explore many kinds of north star or personal statements, allowing them to choose the form that fits them best. It will also be important to lower anxiety and tell youth they can opt out and keep their statement private if they wish.

### 3. Icebreakers: Connecting with your fellow travelers

*Icebreakers are a great way for people to get to know each other in a short period of time. Choose one or two that you think will connect with your youth best.*

#### 1. Quick Line Up

Place masking tape on the ground to designate a line. Then have youth race to line up in order of:

- Number of pets
- Alphabetical by first name
- Height, shortest to tallest
- Birthday month, starting with the current month

#### 2. Two Truths and a Lie

- To start, one person gives three statements about themselves to the rest of the group: two true statements and one lie.
- After they're finished, everyone guesses which statement they think you made up.
- Once everyone has made their guess, reveal which statement was your lie.
- Keep the game going by choosing the person who guessed correctly to go next and then play as many rounds as you'd like.

#### 3. A Deserted Island

This game helps youth learn more about one another by sharing the things they choose not to live without.

- Divide the youth members into multiple small groups to pretend they are on a deserted island.
- Each group must talk among themselves and find out what one precious item each person would bring with them if they were on a desert island. The items should be important or special to the person.
- You can make numerous rounds out of this game by designated specific types of things they can take. I.e. If you only had one kind of tool to take with you, what would it be?" "if you only had one type of drink... one type of vegetable... one condiment... one book... one set of clothes...

#### 4. Fabulous Flags

- Have everyone take a piece of paper and decorate it with as many items as they choose that help to depict their personality, likes, and lifestyle.
- Once everyone's project is complete, each person will stand up and talk about what they included on their flag. This way, each person will get to know each other better through their fabulous flags.

## 4. Quote Wall Ritual: Feelings about the journeying

### Leader Prep

- Make sure quote wall/board has names of youth
- Decide which of the quotes from Appendix A you want to use. In appendix A we've listed 15 quotes but encourage you to narrow the list to around 10.
- Print out quote sheet and cut them into strips, making sure to have 2-3 repeats of the quote strips so more than one youth can pick the same quote

### Introducing the Exercise

- Explain that this quote selection exercise will be something you do at the start of many of your COA sessions and that its purpose is to give the youth a chance to identify and express their first thoughts on the topic of that session in a fun and creative way.
- Clarify that the goal of this particular quote pile & wall exercise is for each youth to identify and pick the one quote of the bunch that best captures their feelings or attitude about "the journey of life." i.e. the guiding question of this exercise is "Which quote best captures your feelings about the journey of life?"

### Directions

The five steps of this activity can be summed up as: "[Find it, Write it, Doodle it, Tape it, Notice It!](#)" Here they are in more detail:

- **Find it:** Look over all the strips of paper and select the one that has a quote on it that most closely reflects your thoughts or feelings on the topic. It's helpful to invite the youth to see their quote choices as reflecting their various "philosophies about life." If you narrow it down to two quotes but find it hard to pick between them, then go ahead and choose both. Treat it as an important sign that you *need* to choose both!
- **Write it:** Write the quote in your journal, making sure to write the session title at the top of the page and then list your quote beneath a top heading titled "First Thoughts."
- **Doodle it:** Use the markers, crayons and colored pencils available to enhance the quote with images, color and designs. Use it as a reflective and expressive practice by thinking carefully about how the colors, images or designs symbolize and further capture your unique take on the quote. For instance, make a particularly important word stand out in bold or with color, write the quote in a spiral to reflect how it leads you to a deep place, use your non-dominant hand to write out the quote if it has to do with childhood or draw a small flow sprouting out of the last letter in the quote to represent how this is a growing edge.
- **Tape it:** Finally tape or glue the quote under your name on your quote wall or under your column on the group quote board. Remember the goal is to be able to watch the quote "pile up."
- **Notice It:** As youth tape or glue, their quotes to the quote wall invite them to take a moment to notice the quotes that the rest of the group has chosen as a momentary connective exercise. Did others choose the same quote they did, did others choose a quote they never would have, were quotes chosen they don't understand.

## 5. Spectrum Exercise: Where our journeys begin

### Leader Prep

- Review and print out the Belief Spectrum Exercise in Appendix B. Also found at this link for easier printing: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cc32-y3OOP4WY9V7UcbZ996FXZwQXSJ5DdWZ4ZHcGiM/edit?usp=sharing>
- This list of spectrums is designed not only as a guide for leaders, but also for youth to track how their views change over the COA journey. So print out numerous copies of the spectrum list, one for each youth. They then can mark where they stand on the spectrum so they can do it again later in the year and see how they've shifted.
- Set up space for the exercise, ensuring there is enough room for all youth to line up. Consider putting masking tape or a string down to signify the spectrum where youth will stand. It helps to put a clear indication of where the middle is.

### Purpose

This exercise helps youth connect by seeing how each other's beliefs are similar and different to their own. It is also a great way for youth to get a sense of where their beliefs are now, allowing them to later reflect on how their minds have changed and grown over the year.

### Directions

- Explain that this is a means to gauge where their beliefs stand right now so they can later in the year reflect on how their minds have changed and grown.
- Hand out a list of the spectrums to each youth so they can mark where they stand.
- Read each set of choices from the belief spectrum exercise sheet and invite youth to stand on a spot on the line that represents what they believe and where that belief puts them in terms of the two poles/options.
- Sometimes neither of the two poles speak to us. That's cool. Tell youth that they are free to place themselves in a creative position "outside the line" when they need to.
- Have them pick a spot on the spectrum, take a moment to look around to see where others are in relation to them, and then ask them to mark where they stand on that spectrum. Repeat for each spectrum.
- Consider having a brief discussion at the end of the exercise using some or all of these questions:
  1. It's not easy to put yourself out there. How did it feel to place yourself on the spectrum with everyone to see?
  2. Comparing ourselves to others is always complicated. How did you feel as you looked around and saw where others stood?
  3. If we asked your friends, would they have accurately guessed where you placed yourself on the line? How about your family?
- At the end of the exercise, have youth place their completed worksheet in their Soul Work Box.

## 6. Listening Skills: Precious tools for the journey

### Leader Prep

- Decide for yourself what kinds of listening skills and practices you want to encourage your youth to use. To help you decide, we've listed a number of possible listening skills below. If you want more background on each listening practice, check out this [resource doc](#).
  - **Really listen.** (*Don't think about what we want to say while others are talking*)
  - **Resist interrupting**
  - **Resist overtalking**
  - **Taking Turns Practice** (see the [listening resource doc](#) for more detail)
  - **Speak from the heart not just the head.** *Lean into vulnerability.*
  - **Make it easier for others to be vulnerable;** *"No fixing, advising or setting straight"*
  - **Wonder, don't attack or judge**
  - **It's ok not to have an answer or not take a turn**
- Settling on what listening skills the group wants to use is important prep work for covenant formation work which comes right after this section. *So be sure to keep track of which listening skills your group commits to because you will want to include them in the list of promises that make up your group covenant.*

### Purpose

This exercise helps youth connect by seeing how each other's beliefs are similar and different to their own. It is also a great way for youth to get a sense of where their beliefs are now, allowing them to later reflect on how their minds have changed and grown over the year.

### Leading the Discussion/Activity

- In your own words, talk about the importance of listening skills.

Here's a playful video that gets at the importance of listening skills. You might want to show it as part of your explanation: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_dAkDsBQyk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dAkDsBQyk)
- Review the suggested listening practices you've picked from the list above. Guide the youth through a discussion about which ones they want to use/commit to.
- Find a way to practice the skills the group decides on. We provide a number of suggested listening activities/games in this document: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/13U7JSeb5mazFkBCh0RBtUahtiX6b61v5AsL92qtuBqw/edit?usp=sharing> Also found in appendix C at the end of this packet.



## 7. Covenanting: Promises for the Journey

### Purpose

Building a covenant helps ensure that youth feel safe and excited about participating in the group and reinforces their understanding that our UU faith is a covenantal faith.

In its most basic form, a covenant is an agreement or promise we make to ourselves and one another about how we want to be together.

We strongly recommend presenting youth with a draft list of covenantal promises, rather than starting with a blank slate. This saves time and provides youth with examples of the kinds of things that are important to include. To help you with this, we provide a suggested draft covenant below. Notice that 1. we use short and easy-to-remember phrasing, and 2. Many of our suggestions reflect the deep listening work done in the previous section. We encourage you to also use these two strategies.

### Leader Prep

- As background for yourself, read over these articles to gain a better understanding of why we covenant and how to covenant with youth.
  - [Why Does Our Congregation Need a Covenant?](#) by UUA staff
  - [The Sacred Oops and Ouch: What UU Youth Have Taught Me About Covenant](#) by Ariel Hunt-Brodnwin's
  - [Bound in Covenant](#) by Victoria Safford
- Review our draft covenant to see how much of it you want to use. See that draft below.
- Prepare your own first draft covenant.
- Write out those first draft covenant promises on a big sheet of paper or chalkboard

### Directions

- Begin by asking the group if anyone can explain what a covenant is and why we create/have them. Use your own understanding of covenant to correct or enhance the youths' understanding.
- Stress the importance of reviewing your covenant from time to time to remind everyone of the promises you've made and to make any needed adjustments. We recommend doing it at the end of each of the "three B's" sections.
- Explain that you are starting with a first draft rather than a blank slate to save time and to put forth examples of the kind of things that are important to include.
- Present your draft covenantal promises and help the youth make the language their own and add their suggestions. This is the fun part! For the covenantal promises to work youth, the language of the promises needs to be their own. Encourage them to re-write the draft promises in their own clever, fun, and memorable language.

## Suggested Draft Covenant

- Show up. Make COA sessions a priority.
- Use and respect [“Oops” & “Ouch”](#)
- Honoring confidentiality. ([“the Vegas Rule”](#))
- (decide how to handle cell phones)
- Really listen. (Don’t think about what we want to say while others are talking)
- Resist interrupting
- Resist overtalking
- Speak from the heart, not just the head. Lean into vulnerability.
- Make it easier for others to be vulnerable; [“No fixing, advising or setting straight”](#)
- [Wonder](#), don’t attack or judge
- It’s ok not to have an answer or not take a turn

## 8. Food and Fun: Bonding as fellow travelers

*\*Whether or not you do the food and fun, be sure to close with the blessing below in section #9*

### Leader Prep

- Purchase and prep food you've decided to eat. See the three options below

### Purpose

Preparing/eating a meal together and playing games as a group is a great way to get to know each other better. People often talk easier when they have something to do, like preparing or eating food. This creates an opening for youth who may be a bit shy or new to the group. We invite you to choose from the options below based on what will work best for your group and budget.

### Food: Make and/or share a meal/snack together

- **Easy**  
Purchase easy snack items or order pizza and salad.
- **Medium**  
Create a build-your-own bar: banana splits/ice cream sundaes or charcuterie board
- **Hard**  
Find a recipe and make a meal together, assigning different tasks to different youth: Lasagna or Breakfast for Dinner

### Fun

- **Fishbowl Conversation starters**  
<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/centerforcampuslife/Involvement/Leadership/documents/FishBowl.pdf>
- **20 Questions** [https://www.amazon.com/Hansen-Electronic-Guessing-Improved-Thousands/dp/B09PGYK7HS/ref=asc\\_df\\_B09PGYK7HS/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=563550137739&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=16554973601732371722&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmld=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9002175&hvtargid=pla-1646474982635&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/Hansen-Electronic-Guessing-Improved-Thousands/dp/B09PGYK7HS/ref=asc_df_B09PGYK7HS/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=563550137739&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=16554973601732371722&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmld=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9002175&hvtargid=pla-1646474982635&psc=1)
- **Heads Up** [https://www.amazon.com/Heads-Party-Guessing-Board-Families/dp/B0914SJYK/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?crid=304XI6FMDOPPR&keywords=heads+up&qid=1657305438&s=toys-and-games&sprefix=heads+up%2Ctoys-and-games%2C66&sr=1-2](https://www.amazon.com/Heads-Party-Guessing-Board-Families/dp/B0914SJYK/ref=sr_1_2?crid=304XI6FMDOPPR&keywords=heads+up&qid=1657305438&s=toys-and-games&sprefix=heads+up%2Ctoys-and-games%2C66&sr=1-2)

## 9. Closing: Blessing Our Fellow Travelers

Close the session by inviting the youth to each offer a blessing to the group. It helps to explain that a blessing is simply expressing a hope for the one you are blessing.

Begin by inviting the youth to think for a moment about what they hope the group will get out of this experience.

Then, to keep it simple, ask each youth to share their blessing by filling in the blank to this sentence:

***“As I think about our journey ahead, I wish \_\_\_\_\_ for all of us.”***

Sometimes it helps to give you some examples of how they might fill in the blank. For instance:

*“As I think about our journey ahead, I wish **courage** for all of us.”*

*“As I think about our journey ahead, I wish **connection** for all of us.”*

*“As I think about our journey ahead, I wish **fun** for all of us.”*

*“As I think about our journey ahead, I wish **the ability to hear our own voice** for all of us.”*

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Quote Strip Options: About the journey of life

To make printing out the following two pages easier, we've also put this list of quotes into their own separate document, found at

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V\\_Ss00aVSFStC5GM8qFralvhto5Q5pGUWGW8kfyVsYE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V_Ss00aVSFStC5GM8qFralvhto5Q5pGUWGW8kfyVsYE/edit?usp=sharing)

*\*Don't forget to print out 2-3 copies of these quote pages to ensure that multiple strips with the same quotes are available, allowing more than one youth to pick the same quote.*

*We've provided 15 quotes below but encourage you to narrow the list down to around 10 quotes/quote strips. This will allow youth to read over all the quotes more quickly.*

**Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.**  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**She remembered who she was and the game changed.**  
*Lalah Delia*

**If you can see your path laid out in front of you step by step, you know it's not your path.**  
*Joseph Campbell*

**Life is not measured by the number of breaths you take but by the moments that take your breath away.**  
*Maya Angelou*

**Life is a journey to be experienced, not a problem to be solved.**  
*Winnie the pooh*

**Life is a journey not a race.**  
*Anonymous*

I am learning to trust the journey even when I do not understand it.  
*Mila bronit*

You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.  
*C.S. Lewis*

Follow your bliss and doors will open where there were no doors before.  
*Joseph Campbell*

There are two questions that a person must ask themselves. The first is "Where am I going?" and the second is "Who will go with me?" If you ever get these questions in the wrong order, you are in trouble.  
*Howard Thurman*

Not all those who wander are lost.  
*J.R.R. Tolkien*

I don't mind getting lost now and then. Maps don't know everything.  
*Ruth Feldman*

The path of awakening is not about becoming who you are.  
Rather it is about unbecoming who you are not.  
*Albert Schweitzer*

A journey is best measured in friends not in miles.  
*Tim Cahill*

Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey.  
*Vera Nazarian*

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.  
*H. Jackson Brown, Jr.*



## Appendix B: Belief Spectrum Exercise

I'VE BEEN A UU FOR  
1 YEAR OR LESS

I'VE BEEN A UU FOR  
FOR MY WHOLE LIFE

.....

I AM RELIGIOUS

I AM SPIRITUAL

.....

I HAVE A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

I DON'T KNOW  
WHAT THAT MEANS

.....

I PRAY

I USED TO PRAY

I'VE NEVER FELT  
THE NEED TO PRAY

.....

I MEDITATE

I'VE TRIED TO MEDITATE

I'VE NEVER FELT THE  
NEED TO MEDITATE

.....

RELIGION IS ABOUT  
WHAT I THINK/BELIEVE

RELIGION IS ABOUT  
WHAT I DO

.....

I BELIEVE IN GOD(S)

I AM AGNOSTIC

I DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD(S)

.....

THE UNIVERSE IS FRIENDLY

INDIFFERENT

HOSTILE

.....

THE FUTURE SEEMS HOPEFUL

THE FUTURE SEEMS SCARY

.....

HUMAN BEINGS ARE  
INHERENTLY GOOD

HUMAN BEINGS ARE  
DEEPLY FLAWED

.....

I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES

I DON'T BELIEVE IN MIRACLES

.....

I'M COMFORTABLE CALLING  
MYSELF A PATRIOT

I'M NOT AT ALL COMFORTABLE  
CALLING MYSELF A PATRIOT

.....

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A POSITIVE  
IMPACT ON MY LIFE

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A NEGATIVE  
IMPACT ON MY LIFE

.....

I TOTALLY KNOW WHO I AM

I'M STILL TRYING TO  
FIGURE OUT WHO I AM

.....

MY FRIENDS KNOW I'M A UU

MY FRIENDS HAVE NO IDEA

.....

I THINK MY MIND WILL CHANGE A LOT  
DURING THE COMING-OF-AGE JOURNEY

I DON'T THINK MY MIND  
WILL CHANGE

.....

**How did it feel to place yourself on the spectrum with everyone to see?**

**How did you feel as you looked around and saw where others stood?**

## Appendix C:

### Listening Activities/Games

*Below are ways to engage with and practice the listening skills your group has decided on.*

Note that under each listening game/activity, we list the listening skills that the game/activity engages. So as you explain the directions for the game/activity, we encourage you also to name the skills that the game/activity helps the youth practice.

If time allows, we also encourage you to spend a bit of time after the game/activity to have a discussion with your youth, asking them how well they think they did, was it easy or hard, and how it made them feel, etc.

- **The Power of Listening** - adapted from Tapestry of Faith

Gather everyone in a circle and have the youth face away from the center and close their eyes. Explain, in these words or your own:

“The objective of the game is simple: With everyone in a circle, individuals call out sequential numbers 1-100. However, any time a person speaks over another person, the count starts over. “

This activity allows youth to engage with the following practices:

- *Really listen. (Don't think about what we want to say while others are talking)*
- *Resist interrupting*
- *Resist overtalking*
- *Taking Turns Practice*
- *It's ok not to have an answer or not take a turn*

- **“Listening Fortune Teller”** Created by RE leader Sadie Kahn-Greene:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ou1GJzm\\_zxuUhos-aG2g5KnNHXT1M8JS/view?fbclid=IwAR0rElf86MC2joU80fUrfvIcRXu273oy8Up6ANp](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ou1GJzm_zxuUhos-aG2g5KnNHXT1M8JS/view?fbclid=IwAR0rElf86MC2joU80fUrfvIcRXu273oy8Up6ANp)

This activity allows youth to engage with the following practices:

- *Taking Turns Practice (see the [listening resource doc](#) for more detail)*
- *Speak from the heart not just the head. Lean into vulnerability.*
- *Make it easier for others to be vulnerable; “No fixing, advising or setting straight”*
- *Wonder, don't attack or judge*

- **Telephone**

<https://icebreakerideas.com/telephone-game/>

This activity allows youth to engage with the following practices:

- ***Really listen.** (Don't think about what we want to say while others are talking)*

**Crossing Paths Authors**  
***April Rosario, Director of Early Youth Resources***  
***Rev. Scott Tayler, Team Lead***



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