



Soul Matters

Paying Attention



Elementary RE
One Room Schoolhouse
March 2026

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Notes About Packet Design & Usage

To get the most out of our RE packets, we encourage users/leaders to periodically review the key components of our design and approach to our elementary age RE packets:

- **2025-26 Enhancements:** Read about all of the enhancements to this year's packets by clicking [here](#).
- **Three Packets to Meet You Where You Are:** This year, 3 different packets come with your elementary RE subscription: One to support lower elementary programming, one to support upper elementary programming, and a third to support one-room schoolhouse RE models.
- **Theme Connection Support:** We are committed to experiential learning, so we don't just suggest stories, games and hands-on activities; we also provide "Set It Up," "Sum It Up," and "Discuss It" components that help group leaders clearly explain how the story, game or activity illustrates or explores the session topic/focus.
- **Bullet Points for Longer Introductions:** Sometimes components of the packet require longer setup wording, such as the wonderbox wording. When this is the case, we provide bulleted talking points. We do this because subscribers told us this was more user-friendly than a fully written-out suggested script. As the year proceeds, please let us know if this change is serving you well.
- **UU Values and Inspiring UUs in Every Packet:** To support UU identity formation, we weave our UU values and stories about inspiring UUs into each month's packet. We've created two important tools to guide us, which also could be used by you if you want to create your own material: a chart that pairs [our monthly themes with the UU values](#) and a chart that pairs [our monthly themes with inspiring UUs](#).
- **User-Friendly, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale "Story Sheets":** To save you time and support you as storytellers, our packets list the recommended wisdom tales and a bit about them, but then provide a hyperlink that takes you to a ready-to-tell and ready-to-print Google doc version of the story.
- **Leader Notes:** Throughout the packet, we offer tips and reminders to support and guide leaders. We identify these leader notes using *purple font and italics*.

Notes About Our Unique Session Sections

Each of our session sections have been designed with care and intentionality. Below, we explain our approach to each session section with some suggestions about how to engage them.

- **Light It! - Chalice Lighting**

The chalice lightings we include in the packet are centered in our [UU core value of love](#), lift up the monthly themes, and tap into the power and fun of body movements. If you'd like an alternative chalice lighting, [HERE](#) is a document with other options.

- **Tell or Read It! - Stories to Inspire Us**

Stories are a wonderful way to bring our monthly themes to life and help us build our identities and bond with one another. This packet offers both picture books and wisdom stories, allowing you to choose the one that best fits the developmental stage of your one-room schoolhouse group.

Some one-room schoolhouse models place the story in worship and use it as the time for all ages. Other models place the story at the beginning of the RE time to introduce the session or in the middle of the RE time to explore that session's theme. To support all three of these approaches, we include story take aways ("Sum it Up") and discussion questions.

- **Wonder Box - Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity**

The activities in the wonder box sections can be used at the beginning of a session to name and introduce that session's theme, or they can be used later in a session as an "[object lesson](#)" to explore the session theme in more depth. Whether or not you use the wonderbox activity depends on the ages and developmental stage of your group.

- **Engage It! - Hands On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning**

Our Engage It section offers a variety of experiential options for exploring each weekly session's theme angle. All of them are offered as "building blocks," meaning we don't intend for you to use them all, but instead we offer them to you as *optional* components to choose from to create your own unique experience/session.

When it comes to implementing a one-room schoolhouse model, the activities in this section can be used *in three different ways*:

- The first way is what might be called a "whole group approach." For this, choose *one or two* of the options that best fit the ages and interests of your particular group (as well as the time you have available). Then have *the entire group of children* do those activities together.
- The second way is a "stations approach." For this, choose two to four of the options and set them up as stations, with each child choosing the station that most interests them. Please know that with this approach some kids may choose to stay at one station the whole time, whereas others may rotate, so plan for some flexibility. For the station model to be the most successful, we suggest having a leader at each one to explain the activity.
- The third way is a "combination approach." For this, choose one activity for the entire group to do together. Then choose two other activities and set them up as stations that kids can self-select into.

- **Extinguish It!**

In each session, we offer chalice extinguishing words for you to bring your time to an end. We design these chalice-extinguishings to echo the chalice lighting's call to love, as well as reiterate that session's takeaway and invitation to action. Like our suggested chalice lightings, these tap into the power and fun of body movements. If you'd like alternative chalice extinguishing words, [HERE](#) is a document with other options.

Welcome to Paying Attention

Hello Friends!

Welcome to the March Soul Matters **One Room Schoolhouse** RE Packet. This month's theme is paying attention, and to honor that, all month long, we are going to explore *the power* of attention.

With that in mind, here are the five “Powers of Paying Attention” we will be looking at in our sessions this month:

Session One: The Power of Paying Attention to Our Impact on Others

Session Two: The Power of Paying Attention to Inequality

Session Three: The Power of Paying Attention to the Present Moment

Session Four: The Power of Paying Attention To Our Relationship with Water

Session Five: The Power of Paying Attention to The Wisdom Within

I am always excited when the theme gives us a chance to explore some of the calendar connections for the month, and even more so when we can dive into some of the *For Fun and On the Fringe* dates on our calendar list. This month, there are three great calendar tie ins with our theme of Paying Attention:

- Our first session gives us the opportunity to explore [World Compliment Day](#), a day that few of us have spent any real time with.
- Our second session will dive into the wisdom and invitations of [International Women's Day](#), which offers us a chance to introduce or reintroduce the inspiring UUs Emily Stowe and Lucy Stone.
- And finally, our fourth session opens up space to lean into [World Water Day](#) in new and fun ways as we play with the power of paying attention to water.

This month's sessions also provide a bridge to exploring our UU values and religious heritage. For instance, in session one, we engage our Humanist heritage as we look at the importance of not overlooking people who are suffering and paying attention to the power we have to help them. Additionally, in session three, we tap into our value of religious pluralism as we explore Buddhism's call to pay attention to the present moment. This Buddhist call to use our attention intentionally also invites us to honor our [UU Value of Equity](#), which challenges us to “use our time, wisdom, **attention**, and money to build & sustain fully accessible & inclusive communities.”

Epictetus, a Greek Stoic philosopher, said, “You become what you give your attention to. If you yourself don't choose what thoughts and images you expose yourself to, someone else will.” It is an important reminder that our journey with attention this month is not simply about learning how to avoid distraction or fine-tune our focus; it's about character formation and how we fine-tune our hearts. With that in mind, thanks for the many ways you protect and shape the hearts of the precious young ones in your care!

April Rosario,
on behalf of the entire [Soul Matters Team](#)

Calendar Connections

March 2026

Click on the hyperlinked names of each event for more information or inspiration.

Interfaith

- [Purim](#) begins (Jewish) - March 2-3, 2026 (more [here](#) & [here](#))
- [Holi](#) (Hindu) - March 4, 2026 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Ostara](#)/ Spring or the Vernal Equinox (Pagan/Wiccan) - March 20 (more [here](#))
- [Ramadan](#) (Islam) - Feb. 17 - March 19, 2026 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Eid al Fitr](#) -end of Ramadan (Islam) - March 19, 2026 (more [here](#))
- [The Annunciation](#) (Christian) - March 25
- [Lent](#) (Christian) - Feb. 18 - April 2, 2026
- [Palm Sunday](#) (Christian) - March 29, 2026

Unitarian Universalist

- [James Reeb](#) dies (1965) - March 11 (more [here](#) and [here](#).)
- [Susan B. Anthony](#)'s Death - March 13
- [Climate Justice](#) Month - March 22 to April 22
- [Viola Liuzzo](#) dies (1965) - March 25
- *Stewardship Season (in some congregations)*

National & Cultural

- [Women's History Month](#)
- [Irish American Heritage Month](#)
- [Peace Corps Established](#) - March 1 (1961)
- [Season for Nonviolence](#) - Jan. 30 - April 4
- [Dred Scott Case](#) - March 6 (1857)
- [International Women's Day](#) - March 8 (more [here](#))
- [Harriet Tubman Day](#) - March 10
- [St. Patrick's Day](#) - March 17
- [World Water Day](#) - March 22
- Archbishop [Oscar Romero](#) dies - March 24 (1980)
- Selma–Montgomery March (1965) - [March 7](#) (first) [March 9](#) (second) & [March 21-25](#) (third)
- Death of [Ida B. Wells](#) - March 25 (1931)
- [International Transgender Day of Visibility](#) - March 31 (more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- [World Compliment Day](#) - March 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [National Day of Unplugging](#) - first Friday of March / Mar. 2
- [Pi Day](#) - March 14
- Everything You Think is Wrong [Day](#) - March 15

Session One:

The Power of Paying Attention to Our Impact on Others

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how powerful attention is. This week, we are focusing on *The Power of Paying Attention to Our Impact on Others*. To do that, we will let [World Compliment Day](#) guide us. As we all know, compliments have the power to brighten people's day, which is a great reminder of how our attitudes, choices, and mood can shape the attitudes, choices, and moods of others. This will help us get at the importance of being intentional about how we are in the world, because for better or worse, our “stuff” spills over into the lives of others.

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)
Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)
As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)
May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)
Help us pay attention to the fact that ([hand to your foreheads](#) and look all around)
Our words and actions matter (make a talking motion with your hands)
And can impact (clap loudly) others.

Tell or Read It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: What's In Your Cup?

(A Modern Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

This story introduces the power of paying attention to our impact on others. It highlights how our words, reactions, and attitudes don't stay inside us. They spill out into the world—and they affect other people.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WlcHegMpowXHgWYdey21fooOTDAsQGRtEkuTMKDsJBY/edit?usp=sharing>

Wisdom Tale 2: The Starfish Trower?

(A Humanist Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

This story calls us to pay attention to our ability to impact the world. When facing big problems it can seem like we are not powerful enough to make a difference. The Humanist part of our UU heritage challenges this idea by calling us to pay attention to the many ways that our “small” actions can make a big impact.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KP92HuTKptLwrYv0J9mwBw7OFAXOVTtfr03kiZIII/edit?usp=sharing>

Picture Book: Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson

Set It Up

“Sometimes we get so caught up in what we’re doing that we overlook others who are sad and struggling. This is why our UU faith challenges us to use our attention to keep a look out for others who might need help or a kind word.. And, often, when we do keep a look out for how we can help others, our kindness spreads and multiplies, because sharing our kindness inspires others to share their kindness. Today’s story is all about this. It’s called *Ordinary Mary*. ”

Video Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34jgOE50sqA>

Sum It Up

In your own words, remind the children of how the story is connected to the session's theme angle.

Discuss it: Reflection Questions to “[Build and Bond](#).”

- What would have happened if Mary hadn't been paying attention?
- Have you ever done something small that made a big difference for someone else?
- Has noticing someone else be kind ever inspired you to be kind?

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time:

Shallow plate or dish, milk (whole milk works best), food coloring (several colors), dish soap, cotton swab



Introduction & Reveal

If using the wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.

If using the wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our wonderbox."

Wondering & Takeaway

- Take everything out of the box and ask the group what they think the jar of dirt has to do with our monthly theme of Paying Attention.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Explain that today you're going to explore how important it is to pay attention to how our actions (positive as well as negative) ripple out and have a wider impact than we often realize.
 - You could also lift up that we often think our words and actions are small: It's just one comment. It's just one compliment. It's just one look. But this object lesson will help us see how even one small choice can affect everything around it.
- The Demonstration (What to Say as You Do It)
 1. Pour the milk into the plate. - **Explain** that this milk represents a community—our classroom, our congregation, our family.
 2. Add drops of food coloring around the plate. - **Explain** that each color represents a person, a feeling, or a moment happening in that community.
 3. Dip the cotton swab dipped in dish soap. - **Explain** that the cotton swab represents a choice we make. Something small—like a word, a tone of voice, or a compliment.
 4. Touch the soap to the center of the milk. - Invite kids to watch what happens when one small action enters the community. Pause and let everyone watch the colors move. Pointing out how the colors don't stay in one place. **Highlight that everything is affected and impacted**
- Point out that one tiny drop changed the whole plate. That's how impact works. A kind word doesn't just affect the person who hears it. It changes the mood of the room. It shifts how people feel about themselves—and about each other.
- The same is true for unkind words or careless actions. They ripple outward, too.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Fill Your Cup

This activity should take 30-45 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out plain ceramic mugs or sturdy reusable cups (one per child), paint pens, ceramic markers, or permanent markers, and inspirational words (printed on a sheet for reference) such as: kindness, patience, joy, gratitude, compliments, gentleness, courage, forgiveness

Set It Up

Start by referencing the Wisdom Tale “What’s In Your Cup?” If you didn’t tell it, here is the reference:

“Imagine you are holding a cup of coffee when someone comes along and bumps into you or shakes your arm, making you spill your coffee everywhere. Why did you spill the coffee? “Well, because someone bumped into me, of course!” Wrong answer. You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup. Had there been tea in the cup, you would have spilled tea. Whatever is inside the cup is what will spill out. Therefore, when life comes along and shakes you (which WILL happen), whatever is inside you will come out. It’s easy to fake it until you get rattled. So we have to ask ourselves... “what’s in my cup?” When life gets tough, what spills over? Joy, gratefulness, peace, and humility? Or anger, bitterness, harsh words, and reactions? You choose!”

So today we’re decorating cups to remind ourselves that life will shake us sometimes. When that happens, what spills out of our cups is what’s already inside them. So it’s very important to choose positive feelings to fill our cups with, such as kindness, patience, gratitude, joy, compliments, and more.”

Directions

- Explain that for this activity, you are going to decorate a mug (or cup) as a visual and practical reminder that what we fill our cup with will spill out into the world and impact others.
- Being by inviting kids to think about:
 - What qualities or attitudes do they want more of inside their cup?
 - Words or short phrases that remind them to fill their cup intentionally.
 - Optional: Write their chosen words on a sticky note first as a guide.
- Have kids write their chosen words around the cup using paint pens or markers. Encourage them to decorate with hearts, waves, suns, or patterns that symbolize spreading out or ripples.
- Remind them: this is a reminder of what they want to spill into the world.
- Invite kids to hold up their cups and share one word or phrase they put on it and why.
- Encourage kids to use their cup at home or school as a daily reminder to fill it with positive qualities before interacting with others.

Discussion Questions

- If your cup spills today, what do you want to flow out onto other people?
- What things could you do each day to make sure that what spills out is helpful and kind?

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and its message that just like in the story What’s in Your Cup?, we can’t control every bump or shake in life. But we can choose what’s inside our cups in the first place!”

Hands-On Activity: Compliment Suns

<https://coffeeandcarpool.com/compliment-suns-friendship-craft/>

This activity should take 15-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children

Activity Prep

Gather and set out yellow and orange cardstock, glue, scissors, pencils, a bowl, to make a perfect circle

Set It Up

"This month, we are exploring how powerful attention is and this week, we are focusing on *The Power of Paying Attention to Our Impact on Others*. To do that, we will let [World Compliment Day](#) guide us. As we all know, compliments have the power to brighten people's day, which is a great reminder of how our attitudes, choices, and mood can shape the attitudes, choices, and moods of others. So for this activity we are making Compliment Suns."

Directions

- Invite kids to use the bowl to trace a perfect circle.
- Next cut out the circle and cut strips of orange and yellow strips of paper about 1 inch thick.
- Invite them to write their name on the sun.
- Next tape or glue on their sun rays (strips of paper)
- Now pass the suns around the group and let each person write a compliment on each ray.
- When everyone has a full sun hang them in your group space.



Game: Spilling Your Coffee Relay

This activity should take 5-15 minutes and is best done with 4+ people.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out spoons, a large bowl or pitcher filled with coffee beans, 2 cup or container labeled “Community Cup”

Set It Up

Start by referencing the Wisdom Tale “What’s In Your Cup?” If you didn’t tell it, here is the reference:

“Imagine you are holding a cup of coffee when someone comes along and bumps into you or shakes your arm, making you spill your coffee everywhere. Why did you spill the coffee? “Well, because someone bumped into me, of course!” Wrong answer. You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup. Had there been tea in the cup, you would have spilled tea. Whatever is inside the cup is what will spill out. Therefore, when life comes along and shakes you (which WILL happen), whatever is inside you will come out. It’s easy to fake it until you get rattled. So we have to ask ourselves... “what’s in my cup?” When life gets tough, what spills over? Joy, gratefulness, peace, and humility? Or anger, bitterness, harsh words, and reactions? You choose!”

This game reminds us how small, intentional choices—like words, moods, and compliments—build up over time and affect the whole community. What we add to the cup matters, because it eventually spills out into the world.”

Directions

- Begin by explaining that each coffee bean represents a word, a choice, or an attitude we bring into the world. One bean seems small—but when we keep adding beans, the cup fills up. What we put in is what builds our impact on others.
- Split the group into teams.
- The first person in group will scoop up one coffee bean and walks/runs carefully across a designated path to “spill” it into a larger “community cup” in the center.
- Each person must say a compliment or kind word to a teammate before “spilling” their coffee.
- The next person repeats.
- First team to have their cup overflow wins

Discussion Questions

- What happened as more and more beans were added?
- Did any one bean cause the spill—or did it take many?
- How is this like the way our words, moods, and choices build up over time?
- What kind of “beans” do compliments add to the community?
- What happens if we stop paying attention to what we’re adding?

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and its message that no single moment creates our impact. It’s the choices we make again and again. Compliments are one way we intentionally add good things to the cup.”

Game: Compliment Dodge Ball

This activity should take 5-15 minutes and is best done with 4+ people.

Activity Prep

Clear a large, open space for safe dodgeball play and gather and set out sheets of paper, pens, or markers

Set It Up

"Today we are focusing on The Power of Paying Attention to Our Impact on Others and how the lessons we can take from [World Compliment Day](#) can guide us. World Compliment Day is today, and it is global initiative to create the most positive day in the world, a day to spread joy through simple verbal affirmations of appreciation. It reminds us that giving a compliment can turn someone's whole day around. So with that in mind, we are going to play a game that helps us practice giving compliments and experience how words "spread" through the group in a playful, physical way."

Directions

- Have each child write down several compliments (one per piece of paper) that are true about the people in the room - Examples: "You make people laugh," "You are kind," "You are a great helper."
- Next, have them crumple the paper into a ball.
- Split the group into two teams (or play free-for-all if the group is small).
- Spread the "compliment balls" around the center of the playing area.
- On "Go!", kids pick up a ball and throw it at someone else (gently).
- When a ball hits someone:
 - That person catches it, opens it, and reads the compliment out loud.
 - Then they crumple it again and toss it to someone else.

Optional Twist: if a ball hits the ground, anyone can grab it and continue spreading compliments.

Optional Variations:

- Fast Round: Set a timer and see how many compliments can "travel" through the group in 1 minute.
- Team Challenge: Teams try to keep all compliments moving without anyone dropping one.

Be sure to remind everyone that this isn't about "elimination" like traditional dodgeball—the goal is to get as many compliments read aloud as possible.

Discussion Questions

- How did it feel to "throw" a compliment and see it land with someone else?
- How did it feel to be "struck" with a compliment?
- Did you notice how quickly the compliments spread through the group?
- What are some ways you can "throw" compliments around in everyday life?

Game: Kindness Bingo

This activity should take 10 -15 and works best with 2+ kids

Activity Prep

Print and set out [bingo cards](#), markers, stickers, or crayons to mark spaces

Optional: small prizes for completed lines or full cards

Set It Up

“Today we’re going to play Kindness Bingo. Each square will give us some ideas about how to pay attention to how our words and actions impact others and how we can actively spread kindness throughout the day or week.”

Directions

Play Bingo

Leader Note: there are images with each compliment if you have kiddos who are not reading yet.

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and its message that compliments, smiles, and acts of kindness can brighten someone’s day. .”

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (*open wide toward each other*)

Who put love at the center of our lives (*hands on heart*)

As we extinguish our chalice (*cup your hands like a chalice*)

And as we go out into the world, (*use finger to make a walking motion*)

Let us remember (*tap the side of your head*)

To pay attention to the fact that (*[hand to your foreheads](#) and look all around*)

Our words and actions matter (*make a talking motion with your hands*)

And can impact (*clap loudly*) others

Session Two:

The Power of Paying Attention to Inequality

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how powerful attention is. This week, we are focusing on the power of paying attention to inequality. To do that, we will let International Women's Day guide us. As we all know, women have a history of calling us to pay attention to women's rights and inequalities of all kinds. We will also get a chance to lift up Emily Stowe and Lucy Stone.

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us (tap the side of your head)

To pay attention to inequity (move your hands like a scale out of balance)

Tell or Read It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: Emily Stowe (An Inspirational UU Ancestor Story)

Theme Connection

This story is about [Emily Stowe](#), a Unitarian who became Canada's first licensed female doctor. It reminds us how important it is not to ignore unfairness when we see it, but instead to pay attention, speak up, and take action so that everyone has a fair chance.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EVJ4tq7D4E7HfVa-RCJIjaZUhhOSqMwlW3SXw5gn3xl/edit?usp=sharing>

Wisdom Tale 2: Lucy Stone (An Inspiring UU Ancestor Story)

Theme Connection

This story is about [Lucy Stone](#), a leading suffragist and abolitionist, who dedicated her life to battling inequality on all fronts. It reminds us that paying attention is powerful, because when we notice and call attention to inequality, it makes it more likely that we and others will choose to act with compassion and courage to change things. Our UU values of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations remind us that we have the power, just like Lucy, to make the world more fair.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wo-6XzDumAADK0lBvyKDAjd48j6nRs1qPgV_jRfR4cM/edit?usp=sharing

Picture Book: *Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai

Set It Up

"All month long, we are exploring how powerful attention can be. When we pay attention to the world around us, we begin to notice that not everyone has the same opportunities. Today's story is about a girl named Malala who paid attention to something that wasn't fair—and used her voice to help change it."

Video Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ti8sirjR1C8>

Sum It Up: In your own words, remind the children of how the story is connected to the session's theme angle.

Discuss it: Reflection Questions to "[Build and Bond](#)"

- What does Malala notice about school and who is allowed to go?
- How does it make her feel when girls are told they cannot learn?
- Why do you think Malala's pencil stops being 'magic' in the story?
- How did paying attention help her decide what mattered most?
- Are there times when people are treated unfairly today?
- What are some ways we can pay attention to inequality where we live?
- What does it mean to use your voice kindly and bravely?
- What would your 'magic pencil' fix?

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time:

A box of band aids



Introduction & Reveal

If using the wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think **Band-Aids** to do with our monthly theme of **paying attention**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Ask everyone to close their eyes and imagine they're at recess, and something goes wrong. They get hurt
 - One at a time, invite kids to quietly tell you what happened to them at recess:
 - "I fell off the monkey bars." "I hit my head." "I scraped my knee." "I twisted my ankle.", etc.
 - Each time, respond kindly, "That sounds painful. I'm sorry that happened."
 - Then—no matter what the injury is—place a Band-Aid on their wrist.
 - Do this for several kids until they start reacting with things like "That doesn't make sense!", "That's not where it hurts!", "Why does everyone get the same thing?"
 - Remind them that **equality** means everyone gets the same thing, but **equity** means everyone gets what they need to heal, learn, or succeed.
 - Lift up that you paid attention to being equal, but I didn't pay attention to what each person actually needed.
 - Highlight that unfairness often happens when people don't pay attention to different needs. Some people need more help, more support, or different tools, not because they're less capable, but because the world isn't set up the same for everyone.
 - But by paying attention to this inequity, we can work to make the world a better place.

Engage It!

Hands-On Activities, Crafts & Games for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Equality Flower Garden

This activity should take 15-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children

Activity Prep

On a large poster board write “When we pay attention to inequality, we help everyone grow.”
Cut and set out construction paper flower parts (petals, centers, stem, leaves), glue, markers

Set It Up

“Today we are honoring International Women Day and exploring the power of paying attention to inequality. This craft reminds us that when we pay attention to inequality—especially the ways women and girls are treated—we can help build a more fair and loving world. Justice begins with noticing.”

Directions

- Invite kids to create a flower by writing or drawing something people need to thrive (Ex. Education, Safety, Clean water, A voice, Respect, etc.)
- When everyone is done have them add their flowers to the poster board to create an Equity Flower garden.

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this activity and its message that equality grows when everyone gets what they need.”

Hands-On Activity: Pay Attention Posters

This activity should take 20 -40 minutes and can be done with any number of kids

Activity Prep

Gather and set out construction paper or cardstock, markers, crayons, stickers, or collage materials (optional) pre-printed photos or name cards of women - Rosa Parks, Malala Yousafzai, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Greta Thunberg, local women leaders, etc.

Set It Up

“This month, exploring how powerful attention is. This week, we’re paying attention to inequality through International Women’s Day. International Women’s Day helps us remember that many women throughout history noticed unfairness and spoke up. They paid attention when people were left out, treated differently, or told they didn’t matter—and they helped change the world. *(Pause and ask a wondering question.)*”

- What are some things kids can pay attention to when something isn’t fair?
- Have you ever noticed someone being left out?

Today, we’re making posters to remind us that paying attention is the first step toward making things better.”

Directions

- Begin by holding up a sample or name a few women and explaining that these are some women who paid attention to inequality in different ways.
 - Rosa Parks noticed unfair rules based on people's race and skin color.
 - Malala Yousafzai noticed girls weren't allowed to learn.
 - Ruth Bader Ginsburg noticed unfair laws.
 - Greta Thunberg noticed people weren't paying attention to the Earth.
- Ask kids to write at the top of their paper: "I Pay Attention When..."
- Invite kids to complete the sentence with words, drawings, or both. (Offer examples)
 - "I pay attention when someone is left out."
 - "I pay attention when rules aren't fair."
 - "I pay attention when people don't get the same chances."
 - "I pay attention when someone needs help."
- Remind them that there is no wrong answer—this is about what they notice.
- Next, invite kids to add the name of a woman (someone famous) who noticed inequality by:
 - Drawing a woman who helped make things fairer
 - Gluing on a picture or name card
- And have them add a simple caption:
 - "She noticed something unfair."
 - "She spoke up."
 - "She helped change things."
- Finally, invite kids to decorate their posters with symbols of justice (scales, hearts, hands); bright colors to show courage and hope; words like fairness, courage, kindness, attentiveness

Sum It Up

"In our Unitarian Universalist faith, we believe every person matters. And paying attention helps us live that belief. So let us remember this activity and its message that when we pay attention to inequality, it makes it easier to choose to be helpers, truth-tellers, and justice-makers."

Game: “Notice & Move!” – A Justice Movement Game

This activity should take 5-15 minutes and needs at least 3 players

Activity Prep

Clear a large open space and make 4 signs (LEARN, SPEAK, REST, HELP) and post them around the room

Set It Up

“Today’s game will get us moving, but it’s also about thinking quickly and noticing carefully. You’ll hear short situations and decide what someone in that story needs most. There won’t always be one right answer—and that’s okay. Justice work often begins with asking better questions, not having perfect answers. As we play, let’s remember that we are also honoring International Women’s Day and the way it invites us to pay special attention to the experiences of women and girls—especially in places where their rights, education, or voices are limited. As we play, think about how paying attention can help us act with more fairness and compassion.”

Directions

Optional: play music for added energy

- Begin with everyone in the center of the room.
- Explain that you will call out a scenario and kids must go to the sign that matches what they think the persons need is - Example prompts:
 - “A girl who is not allowed to go to school.” → LEARN
 - “Someone whose ideas are ignored.” → SPEAK
 - “A person who works all day and feels exhausted.” → REST
 - “A community after a flood or fire.” → HELP
- Count down quickly (“3–2–1 MOVE!”) to keep the pace fast.
- After everyone arrives, pause briefly and ask one quick noticing question (10 seconds max):
 - “What did you notice?”
 - “Why did you choose that spot?”
- Call everyone back to the center and start the next round immediately.

Sum It Up

“Let’s remember this game and its message that paying attention helps us see what people actually need—not just what we think they need.”

Game: The Great Fairness Scramble

This activity should take 15-25 minutes and needs at least 3+ people

Activity Prep

Gather and set out 100 small items (candies, tokens, dominoes, poker chips, etc.)

Leader Note: if you have a group of more than 10 you will want 200 items

Set It Up

"This month is all about exploring the power of paying attention, and today we are the power of noticing inequality or when things aren't fair. Now we're going to play a game that will help us see what inequality can look like."

Directions

- Begin by explaining that the small items (candies, tokens, or chips) represent resources—things people need to live well, like education, healthcare, safety, and opportunities.
- Go over the rules
 - When the game starts, you may pick up as many items as you can.
 - You may not touch another person—no grabbing, pushing, or blocking.
 - When I say "stop," everyone freezes.
 - Make sure everyone understands this is a learning game, not a competition.
- Scatter the items on the floor.
- Say "GO!" and let kids collect items.
- After about 30–60 seconds, call "STOP!"
- Have everyone sit in a circle and count how many items they collected.
- Ask them not to trade or share yet—just notice.

Reflection & Discussion

- How did it feel during the scramble?
- How did it feel when it ended? Did anyone feel frustrated, excited, left out, or surprised?
- Did everyone end up with the same amount?
- Was anyone surprised by how many or how few they got?
- Did anyone notice certain people getting more very quickly?

Explain: Even though everyone started at the same time, the ending wasn't fair. That's something that happens in the real world, too."

- Do you think this felt fair?
- Why or why not?

Explain: Equality means everyone gets the same chance. Equity means everyone gets what they need to do well.

- If this were real life, what might people with fewer resources need?
- What could make this game feel more fair?
- If you had a lot of items, what could you do to help others?
- Why might it matter to pay attention to who has more and who has less?

Sum It Up

"Let's remember this game and its challenge to pay attention to who is being left out and then use our voices and power to help make things fairer."

Game: Noticing Chairs (Modified Musical Chairs)

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and needs at least 2 people

Activity Prep: Gather and set out chairs nearby, but do not set them up yet.

Set It Up

“Today we’re going to play a game that helps us practice paying attention. Sometimes when we play games, we think winning or losing is about how fast or smart we are. But today’s game is different. This game will help us notice something important: sometimes things are unfair not because of the people playing, but because of how the game is set up.

One important reminder: This is just a game. No one is in trouble, and no one did anything wrong. We’re practicing noticing together.”

Directions

Start by asking kids to help you arrange some chairs in a circle - **Use fewer chairs than children, but do not say how many or why.**

Round 1: Play Normally

- Start the music and invite kids to walk around the chairs.
- Stop the music.
- Anyone without a chair stands to the side. Important: Do not eliminate kids. Say: “You’re still part of the game. You’re going to be our noticers.”

Round 2: Change the System (Quietly)

- Play again, but this time, when the music stops, remove more than one chair or remove chairs unevenly from one side. **Do not explain what you’re doing yet.**
- Play again and again. When the music stops, remove more than one chair or remove chairs unevenly from one side. **Do not explain what you’re doing yet.**

Pause the Game (Very Important.) Before feelings escalate, stop and gather the group.

“Let’s pause. Before we keep playing, let’s pay attention to what’s happening.”

- Did everyone have the same chance to sit? Did anyone do anything wrong? What changed between the first round and the second round?
- Name the key insight clearly: “The game became unfair because the *rules and setup changed*, not because of the people.”

Round 3:

Ask: “What could we change to make this game fairer?”

Let kids suggest ideas, such as adding more chairs, changing how people move, sharing chairs, slowing the music

Play one round using their ideas.

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this game and its many messages, especially that, in real life, inequality often works like this game. Some people don’t get what they need, not because they didn’t try, but because the system doesn’t give everyone the same chances. Women and other groups have often noticed this and said, ‘Hey—this isn’t fair.’ And by drawing attention to that lack of fairness, they have motivated others to help change things. Let’s remember to do the same!”

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember (tap side of head)

To pay attention to inequity (move your hands like a scale out of balance)

Session Three:

The Power of Paying Attention to the Present Moment

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how powerful attention is. This week, we are focusing on the power of paying attention to the present moment. As we do that, we will have the chance to explore some of the ways we can recenter ourselves in a world full of distractions that can knock us off balance. This session also gives us a chance to celebrate the wisdom of Buddhism and the spiritual practice of being in the present moment.

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us (tap the side of your head)

To slow down, (move body in slow motion)

Focus our attention, (bring your hands to your eyes as if you are looking through binoculars)

And let the calm of the present moment flow through us (Everyone takes a deep breath together)

Tell or Read It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale: The Framers' Luck

(A Zen / Chinese Buddhist Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

This story is about a farmer who experiences a series of events—some seem good, some bad. Each time, neighbors judge the moment, and the farmer replies, “Maybe.” The story reminds us not to get stuck in stories about the past or future, but to stay grounded in what is happening right now.

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sbeDYEgonUmBzz2r2ZIYvQXHvGeZxJAusz8VRkPXCmw/edit?usp=sharing>

Picture Book: What Does it Mean to Be Present? by Rana DiOrio

Set It Up

“This story reminds us how important it is to pay attention to the current moment, rather than being distracted by the past or future. It teaches us to be present through everyday activities like listening carefully, waiting patiently, noticing details, and helping others, making life richer and happier.”

Video Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79m2G0nnDi4>

Sum It Up

In your own words, remind the children of how the story is connected to the session's theme angle.

Discuss it: Reflection Questions to “[Build and Bond](#)”

- What helped the character slow down and notice?
- How does your body feel when you are really paying attention?
- When do you feel most present—playing, listening to a story, outside, or with a friend?
- What makes it hard to be present sometimes?
- How can we help our bodies and minds come back when they wander?

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time: Ice Cubes



Introduction & Reveal

If using the wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think **they have** to do with the monthly theme of Paying Attention.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Explain, sometimes our bodies and minds react before we even think.
 - Ask kids to imagine something really cold touching their hand and have them think about how their first instinct is to pull away!
 - Explain that today's wonderbox is interactive and is going to help them explore what happens when we keep our attention on a feeling rather than reacting right away to alter that experience. This is a way to practice being in and paying attention to the present moment.

Steps / Guided Practice

- Give each kid an ice cube. Ask them to place it gently in your palm or against their skin.
 - Take a slow, deep breath in... and out.
 - Feel your skin noticing the cold.
 - Pay attention to the strong sensations—the cold, the pressure, maybe even a tingling feeling.
 - Notice your first urge: maybe you want to drop it, shake it, or rub it quickly. That's normal!
 - Try staying with the sensation for a few breaths.
 - Watch what happens as you notice the feeling without acting to change it immediately.
 - You can move the ice slowly to another spot on your hand or arm.
 - Try rotating it gently or noticing how the sensation changes.
- Highlight that when we notice how our bodies and minds react, without immediately acting, we are practicing presence and are learning to stay with what is happening right now, even if it's uncomfortable.
- Our first reactions are automatic, but by paying attention, we can choose how to respond.
- Mindfulness isn't about avoiding discomfort—it's about noticing it, understanding it, and being present."

Engage It!

Activities & Crafts for Experiential Learning

Creative Activity: Mindful Path Stones

Leader Note: This makes a wonderful faith-in-action activity for all ages. The stones can be collected from every group and combined, making a beautiful, shared creation. It would also work wonderfully as a multigenerational activity for the entire congregation to participate in together."

This activity should take 10-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out Smooth stepping stones, paints, markers, or acrylic pens.

This could also be done with paper stepping stones that were laminated and then used inside

Set It Up

"This week, we are exploring the power of paying attention to the present moment. In life, every step matters—if we rush, we might miss something important. So to help us remember this, we are going to make a Mindful Path for the whole congregation to use as part of their spiritual practice. These stones will remind us to notice each step, each moment, and pay attention to what is happening right now."

Directions

- Invite kids to decorate the stones by painting or drawing a symbol on each stone that reminds them of mindfulness or being present. Ideas: a heart, a star, a spiral, a sun, or a simple word like "Breathe," "Notice," or "Here."
- Once the stones are dry, place them in a spiral pattern and encourage folks to walk along the path, stepping carefully from stone to stone, paying attention to each movement. Choose Your Spot: Find a quiet, private area, like a garden corner, with space for 10-15 paces back and forth.

Mindful Walking Practice (Using the Path)

- Start: Stand at one end, take deep breaths.
- Walk Slowly: Move deliberately, focusing on the sensation of your heel, ball, and toes touching the ground with each slow step (e.g., "left foot, right foot").
- Engage Senses: Notice the air, sounds, and feelings in your environment without judgment.
- Turn: At the end, pause, breathe, then turn gently.
- Repeat: Walk back and forth for 8-10 minutes, letting the path become a rhythm for your awareness.

Sum It Up

"Let us remember this activity and its message that **every step we take—and every moment we notice—matters**. Just as we decorated and arranged our stones with care, we can move through life with care, attention and intention, noticing the world around us and the feelings inside us. By practicing mindfulness, we can stay grounded, balanced, and present, even when life feels busy or unpredictable."

Hands-On Activity: Bubble Breathing: Watching the Present Moment

This activity should take 20-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out bubble wands, bowls and bubble solution ingredients - 2 cups water, 1/2 cup Dawn soap, and 1/8 cup syrup/glycerin.

Set It Up

"In Buddhism, people practice paying attention to their breath. Today we're going to practice breathing and paying attention—using bubbles!"

Directions

Leader Note: You can also just use store bought bubble solution

- Begin by having kids make their own bubble solution by mixing (gently stirring to avoid foam) 2 cups water, 1/2 cup Dawn soap, and 1/8 cup syrup/glycerin.
- Next give each child a bubble wand and say something like: "Let's take a slow breath in through our nose... and slowly blow out to make a bubble."
- Invite kids to: Watch the bubble grow. Notice when it lets go. Follow it with their eyes until it pops or floats away. Encourage silence for a few breaths while watching.

Discussion

- What did you notice about your breath?
- Did your bubble go fast or slow?
- What happened when the bubble popped?

Sum It Up

"Let us remember this activity and its message that like bubbles that moments don't last forever. When we pay attention, we can enjoy them while they're here."

Game: Balloon Balance: Gentle Focus in Motion

This activity should take 5-10 minutes and can be done with any number of kids

Activity Prep

Gather and set out blown up balloons

Set It Up

"This game is about moving slowly and paying attention."

Directions

- Give each child a balloon.
- Explain the goal: To try to keep the balloon off the ground using gentle, slow movements.
- Offer variations - only left hand, only right hand, only elbows, etc.,
- Add to the difficulty by gradually adding more and more balloons

Sum It Up

"Let us remember this game and its message that paying attention helps us move with care. When we slow down, we stay more balanced."

Game: Head, Shoulders, Knees, and CUP!

<https://kidologist.com/2020/01/27/head-shoulders-knees-and-cup-fun-youth-group-game/>

This activity should take 5-10 minutes and needs at least 2 people

Activity Prep

Gather and set out plastic cups

Set It Up

“This week, we are exploring how important it is to pay attention to the present moment. Because, let's be honest, sometimes it's easy for our minds to wander. We might be thinking about what happened yesterday, what's for lunch, or what we want to do after this activity. This game is a fun way to practice paying attention to what is happening right now, since you will have to listen carefully and follow the changing instructions. We're training our minds to notice the present moment.”

Directions

- Invite kids to pair up (if you have an odd number, you can have a group of 3) and face each other
- Place a plastic cup upside down on the floor between them.
- The call rapidly calls out body parts (Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes, Ears, Nose, etc.).
- Kids quickly touch the corresponding body part, as it's called.
- The Twist: The leader suddenly shouts "CUP!" instead of a body part.
- The Win: The first player to grab the cup wins the round and advances.
- Elimination: The loser sits out or finds a new partner, continuing until one winner is left standing.

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this activity and its message that paying attention to the present moment takes practice. Just like in the game, life is full of surprises, distractions, and changes. When we notice what is happening right now, our bodies, our thoughts, and what's around us, we can respond with care, stay balanced, and even have more fun along the way. Being fully present helps us see clearly, act wisely, and be more aware of ourselves and others.”

Game: Twister

This activity should take 10-20 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep: Gather and set out the game Twister

Set It Up

“Sometimes life feels a little twisty—our bodies get wobbly, our minds get busy, and we might want to rush or give up. Today we're going to play Twister in a special way that helps us practice paying attention and staying in the moment.”

Directions

- Invite kids to play Twister but remind them that before they move, to pause and take one slow breath.”
- Encourage them to notice how their body stretches and where they feel pressure or balance

Discussion

- What did you notice about your body?
- Was it hard to stay balanced?
- What helped you keep going when it got tricky?

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this game and its message that just like in Twister, life can feel wobbly. When we pay attention to our bodies and breath, we can stay present—even when things aren’t easy.”

Game: Present Moment Jenga

This activity should take 10-15 minutes and needs at least 2 people

Activity Prep

Gather and set out one or more Jenga sets (depending on group size)

Set It Up

“Today we’re practicing the power of paying attention to the present moment. Jenga works best when we slow down, notice what’s happening right now, and respond carefully. This isn’t a game about winning—it’s a practice in paying attention.”

Directions

- Build the Jenga tower(s) and gather kids in a circle around each tower so everyone can see.
- Players take turns removing one block at a time and placing it on top.
- No rushing. No tapping multiple blocks at once.
- Everyone stays quiet while someone is taking their turn to help them focus.
- When the tower falls (and it will) do not frame this as failure. Say something like “The tower fell because gravity happened—not because someone did something wrong.”

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this game and its message that paying attention to the present moment doesn’t mean nothing ever falls. It means we meet each moment with care, awareness, and intention. When we’re present, we respond instead of react.”

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember (tap side of head)

To slow down, (move body in slow motion)

Focus our attention, (bring your hands to your eyes as if you are looking through binoculars)

And let the calm of the present moment flow through us (Everyone takes a deep breath together)

Session Four:

The Power of Paying Attention To Our Relationship with Water

Theme Angle

All month long, we are exploring how powerful attention is. This week, we are focusing on the power of paying attention to our relationship with water. To do that, we will let World Water Day guide us. As we all know, next month is Earth Day, which invites us to look at many of the issues around the climate crisis, but World Water Day gives us the gift of focusing on this one aspect of nature and the earth. It's also a chance to have a lot of fun playing with water!

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)
Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)
As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)
May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)
Remind us (tap the side of your head)
That our relationship with water (move arms in wave motion)
is more complex and wonderful than we often

Tell or Read It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: What if Water is God

(A Modern Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

“This story invites us to slow down and really notice water—not just as something we use, but as something we are deeply connected to. By asking “what if,” we discover how much meaning and mystery flows through our relationship with water. World Water Day reminds us that paying attention to the wonder of the natural world will inspire us to care for it better.”

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pV6_yQimnRCI3ISJqDX8NIjsITwSQYoDJInVq6bxhUE/edit?usp=sharing

Picture Book: Save Water Every Day by Mari Schuh

Set It Up

“This story reminds us of where water comes from and some simple everyday mindful habits we can practice as we pay attention to using it responsibly.”

Video Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUKMNgqFnI0>

Sum It Up

In your own words, remind the children of how the story is connected to the session's theme angle.

Discuss it: Reflection Questions to “[Build and Bond](#)”

- Why do you think water is important?
- Where do we use water every day? (drinking, washing hands, brushing teeth, watering plants...)
- What do you think it means to save water?
- Why do you think paying attention to water matters for the Earth?
- How do you feel when you see someone being careful with water?
- What surprised you about how much water we use every day?
- How can we remember to save water every day?
- What happens when we pay attention to how much water we use?
- What is one small thing you can do this week to help take care of water?

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time:

- A shallow clear bowl or tray of water (or a small tub if outside)
- Pebbles or small stones
- Optional: food coloring drops (to show spreading effect)



Introduction & Reveal

If using the wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Reveal the objects in the wonderbox and ask the group what they think all of these objects have to do with our monthly theme of **paying attention**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Place the shallow tray/bowl of water where everyone can see it and drop a pebble or stone gently into the water.
 - Invite everyone to watch closely: the ripple spreads outward from where the pebble landed. Optional: Add a drop of food coloring—watch as the color slowly spreads through the water.
 - Ask kids to notice:
 - "Where does the ripple start?" and "Where does it go?"
 - "What is being affected along the way?"
 - Repeat with a second pebble in a different spot. Compare: How do the ripples meet? How does water carry the effect outward?
 - Ask:
 - "What did you notice about how the ripple spreads?"
 - "Could you see everything the water touched?"
 - "How is this like water in real life—rivers, rain, or the water we use at home?"
 - "What might happen if water is polluted or blocked along its path?"
 - "How does paying attention to water help us care for the plants, animals, and people it touches?"
- Point out that water is never just in one place—it travels, affects, and nourishes in ways we don't always notice. Paying attention helps us see its hidden power and the responsibility we have to protect it.

Engage It!

Activities & Crafts for Experiential Learning

Hands-On Activity: Watercolor Art

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep: Gather and set out watercolor paints, paper, and brushes.

Set It Up

“Water is part of our world and part of us. Today we are going to paint a picture of our relationship with water: what it feels like, how we play in it, how it helps us. When we notice water and see it as part of our lives, it helps us love it, and love makes us want to take care of it.”

Directions

- Give each child a sheet of watercolor paper and access to paints.
- Ask them to think about how they relate to water. Some prompts to inspire ideas:
 - Where do you play in water?
 - What does water feel like on your skin?
 - What colors, shapes, or textures remind you of water?
 - How does water help you or make you happy?
- Invite them to paint freely, letting water inspire color, shape, and movement.
- They can use blues, greens, purples, and even warm colors to show how water affects them.
- Encourage them to let the paint flow, like water flows—dripping, blending, and moving across the page.
- Optional: sprinkle salt on wet paint to see patterns, or use a sponge/droppers to mimic rain, waves, or splashes.
- Invite kids to share their paintings

Discussion

- Can you show us a part of your painting that shows where you play or connect with water?
- Did you notice anything new about water as you painted? How does painting water help you see it as part of your life?
- Do you think that painting water and helping people see how beautiful water is will help people take care of and protect water better? Why?

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this activity and its message, just like we cared for our painting and paid attention to every ripple and color, we can care for real water in the world, because when we love water and see its beauty, we want to protect it.”

Hands-On Activity: Coconut Water Lemonade

<https://rasamalaysia.com/coconut-water-lemonade/>

This activity should take 20-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out the following ingredients (This recipe makes 18 6oz cups - please scale up or down as needed)

- 12 cups canned coconut water
- 15 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 9 calamansi lime (extract the juice, optional)
- 9 tablespoons sugar or agave nectar
- 6 lemons (sliced)
- 6 cups ice
- mint leaves for garnishing

***Leader Note:** Before making this drink, be sure to make sure no one in your group has a coconut allergy. If kids do have a coconut allergy, here is an alternative: [Watermelon-Lime Aqua Fresca](#). Have kids work together to make and serve this refreshing drink during coffee hours.*

Set It Up

"Today we're going to make coconut water lemonade. Coconut water is a special liquid that comes from the inside of a young coconut. It's a reminder that water doesn't just help us survive—it connects us to the trees, the earth, and the sun that nourished it along the way.

Today, we are going to make coconut water lemonade to share with folks during coffee hour. As we pour and share this drink, we are not only offering something refreshing, we are also practicing being in relationship with water—noticing where it comes from, how it gives life, and how sharing it can bring joy and connection to others."

Directions

- Slice the lemon into pieces, and set aside.
- In a pitcher, combine the coconut water, lemon juice, calamansi lime juice, and sugar together. Stir to mix well. Add the sliced lemons and ice into the pitcher.
- Pour the lemonade into glasses and garnish with mint leaves.

Sum It Up

"Let us remember this activity and its reminder that, just like the coconut water lemonade we made, water is something we share, not something we own and keep to ourselves."

Hands-On Activity: Decorate Your Water Bottle

This activity should take 15-30 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out reusable water bottles (plastic or metal), permanent markers (age-appropriate), stickers (optional: water-themed, animals, plants), modge podge

Set It Up

“Today we’re going to decorate our very own water bottles! Each bottle is a special reminder that water is precious and that we can pay attention to how we use it every day. Water helps us drink, clean, play, and grow plants and animals. When we notice and care for water, we are practicing something very important—just like World Water Day teaches us!”

Directions

- Invite kids to think about water as they decorate.
 - Why water is important
 - Ways to save water
 - Fun things they enjoy doing with water
- Once done paint over design with modge podge to preserve it
- Invite kids to show their bottles and explain what reminds them to pay attention to water.

Sum It Up

“Look at your water bottles! Each one is unique, just like every drop of water in the world. Let us remember this activity and its message that when we notice water and care for it, we are paying attention to the world around us. These bottles are more than just containers—they remind us that water is precious, and every day we can choose to use it carefully, enjoy it, and celebrate it!”

Hands-On Activity: DIY Water Filter

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/books/article/water-wonders>

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out

- Clean plastic bottles (cut in half, the top half acts as a funnel)
- Coffee filters or paper towels
- Cotton balls or cotton pads
- Sand (fine and coarse if possible)
- Gravel or small pebbles
- A small container or jar to catch filtered water
- Dirty water (mix tap water with soil, small bits of leaves, or food coloring for visual effect)
- Rubber bands or tape to secure layers

Set It Up

“Today, we’re paying attention to our relationship with water. Water is essential for life, but sometimes it becomes dirty or polluted. Our bodies, animals, plants, and communities need clean water to thrive. Today, we’re going to explore how we can help water along its journey by paying attention to how to filter it.”

Directions

- Begin by showing the materials and explaining that each layer of the filter has a job, just like nature has its own ways of cleaning water (plants, rocks, soil, etc.).
- Next, have kids make dirty water
- Make the Filter
- Place the top half of the plastic bottle upside-down into a jar or container (like a funnel). And then layer the materials in this order:
 - Cotton balls at the bottom (closest to the bottle opening)
 - Fine sand on top of cotton
 - Coarse sand next
 - Small gravel or pebbles at the top
 - Secure a coffee filter at the very top with a rubber band
- Pour the “dirty water” slowly into the top and watch it filter through each layer.
- As you wait for the water to filter, have a discussion about Paying Attention to Global Water Challenges

Noticing & Observation

- What did you notice about the water before and after it went through your filter?
- Which layer of the filter seemed to do the most work? Why do you think that is?
- How is this like water in the world—where it comes from, where it goes, and what affects its quality?

Connection to Global Water Issues

- Did you know that millions of people around the world don’t have clean water to drink? How does that make you feel?
- How do you think dirty or unsafe water affects people, animals, and plants?
- If water can carry things we don’t want (like dirt or pollution), what does that tell us about how we need to take care of it?

Responsibility & Action

- What are some ways we can pay attention to water where we live to help keep it clean?
- How does learning about water in other places help us understand the value of water here?
- Why do you think World Water Day asks people all over the world to notice and care for water?

Reflection / Personal Connection

- How does your relationship with water change when you really notice it, as we did in this activity?
- What is one thing you can do this week to show care for water?
- How can we share what we learned about water with friends or family to help them notice it too?

Leader Note: Be sure to remind kids that the slower the water goes, the better! The longer it takes for water to move through a filter, the cleaner it gets. Water slips easily through the filter materials, but bigger gunk, like dirt, gets trapped. The filter materials usually get finer and finer, so they can catch whatever was missed earlier. Activated charcoal can be near the end of the water's path, because it uses an electrical charge to grab particles too small for us to see. Your filtered water is not clean enough to drink. But a plant will love it!

Sum It Up

"Let us remember this activity and its message, that water moves through many systems and touches many things before we drink it. Paying attention to water's journey helps us care for it, just like adding layers makes water cleaner. Even small actions—like filtering water or keeping it clean—have ripple effects for people, animals, and nature."

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)

As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)

And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)

Let us remember that our relationship with water (move arms in wave motion)

is more complex and wonderful than we often realize. (Open your mouth and widen your eyes as if you are amazed)

Session Five:

The Power of Paying Attention to The Wisdom Within

Theme Angle

All month long, we've been exploring how powerful paying attention is. This week, we are focusing on the power of paying attention to the wisdom within and how we can trust and tap into inner resources, such as our conscience.

Light It!

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)

Who put love at the center of our lives. (hands on heart)

As we light this chalice today, (cup your hands like a chalice)

May the flames (wiggle your fingers like flickering flames)

Remind us (tap the side of your head)

To pay attention and listen (place hand near ear)

To the wisdom within (point to your chest/heart)

Tell or Read It!

Stories to Inspire Us

Wisdom Tale 1: What if Water is God

(A Modern Wisdom Tale)

Theme Connection

“This story invites us to slow down and really notice water—not just as something we use, but as something we are deeply connected to. By asking “what if,” we discover how much meaning and mystery flows through our relationship with water. World Water Day reminds us that paying attention to the wonder of the natural world will inspire us to care for it better.”

Printable, Ready-to-Use Wisdom Tale Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pV6_yQimnRCI3ISJqDX8NIjsITwSQYoDJInVq6bxhUE/edit?usp=sharing

Picture Book: Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia

Set It Up

“Today, we are exploring listening to our hearts or our inner wisdom. Does anyone know where their heart is? (Pause and allow time for the children to answer.) Yes, it is right here inside our bodies, in our chests. (Point to your heart) Did you know that our bodies, like our hearts, talk to us all day long and tell us all kinds of things? They do! So, with that in mind, today's story is about just that: Listening to our bodies and the wisdom contained in them.”

Video Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-B6Rik-TA-Q>

Sum It Up

In your own words, remind the children of how the story is connected to the session's theme angle.

Discuss it: Reflection Questions to “[Build and Bond](#)”

- Has your body ever told you things? What did it say?
- What do you notice when the character in the book talks about different feelings in the body?
- Can you remember a time when your body gave you a “signal” about something—like feeling nervous, excited, or uncomfortable?
- How does paying attention to your body help you understand what you need or how you feel?
- What kinds of “messages” does your body give you, and how do you usually respond to them?
- How can our feelings help guide us in making good choices?

Wonder Box

Objects to Cultivate Our Curiosity

Reflection Object to Gather Ahead of Time:

Hearts - one per child



Introduction & Reveal

If using the wonderbox to introduce the session and session theme:

- Remind the children that each month we explore a different theme, and each week we explore the monthly theme in a unique way.
- Explain that the wonderbox will provide us with a clue about today's unique exploration of the monthly theme.
- Reveal what is in the box.

If using the wonderbox to help the children explore the session angle in more depth:

- Introduce the wonderbox with something like, "And now let's explore today's topic some more by finding out what is in our wonderbox."
- Reveal what is in the box.

Wondering & Takeaway

- Ask the group what they think **the hearts** have to do with our monthly theme of **paying attention**.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm. Ask follow-up questions if needed, then share the answer:
 - Remind kids that all month they have been exploring the theme of paying attention, and today, we are exploring what it means to pay attention to the wisdom we each have inside us.
 - Highlight that wisdom is when you use what you know to make good choices and do the right thing.
 - Point out that people have all different names for this type of inner wisdom. Some people call it God, while others call it your heart, or your conscience, or Jiminy Cricket, or your gut, or your inner voice.
 - Remind them that at the end of the day, the name is not really the most important. The most important thing is that we pay attention to it because being mindful of our wisdom within and remembering that paying attention to it is the thing that keeps us from being swept up and lost in the loud and swirling voices of others.

Engage It!

Activities & Crafts for Experiential Learning

Mindfulness Moment: Heart Listening

<https://www.scienceofmindchild.com/inner-wisdom/>

Leader Note: This meditation is inspired by the centering down technique of listening of the Quakers.

This activity should take 5-10 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Set It Up & Directions

Begin by inviting your kids to lie down in a dark space and close their eyes, and then read the script below

Let us begin by allowing our bodies to relax.

Allow your eyes to go inward, focusing on your heart.

Now, turn your ears inward and listen to your heart.

You may hear the sound it makes, but what you are really listening for is the feelings.

The heart speaks very softly; we must quiet the brain to hear it well.

The brain likes to be busy, which is very helpful and useful, but now it is time for thinking to rest.

If we notice the brain thinking, gently and sweetly remind it to take its rest from work.

Let it know you will be using it again tomorrow so that it can take a break now.

Focus again on the heart. Keep the eyes and ears focused inward, centering into the heart space.

Relax.....Breath. Feel the chest rising and falling.

As your attention remains focused on the heart, you may notice a feeling or sensation of expansion. This begins in the body but quickly moves out and beyond the body.

You may even feel you are moving outside of your body.

Do not feel that you have to label or describe the feelings; just be in the experience.

Stay with this sensation or with any other feelings that arise.

(Pause here for a few moments and let kids stay with whatever they are feeling)

As you are ready, slowly begin to return your attention to the here and now.

As you do remember the importance of taking time or making time to listen to your heart often. It is always ready to talk.

Mediation Reflections

- What was that like for you?
- Have you ever spent intentional time like that before trying to listen to your heart?
- Does anyone feel comfortable sharing what they heard when they were turned inward?

Hands-On Activity: What Does Your Inner Wisdom Look Like

This activity should take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set out paper and coloring supplies

Set It Up

"Many of us have a voice in our heads. That voice can be caring, supportive, negative or critical. That voice can remind us of right and wrong or what our beliefs and values are. That voice can also be the voice of our inner wisdom. Like we talked about earlier, people have all different names for that voice of inner wisdom. For today's activity, we are going not only to name it, but also explore what it might look like, as a way of better enabling us to pay attention to it."

Directions

- Start by sharing the names/metaphors that others use to describe their inner voice (God, your heart, your conscience, Jiminy Cricket, your gut, or your inner voice).
- Then ask the kids to pick the name/metaphor that resonates with them the most. Or pick one of their own.
- Then invite and help them draw that, both what it looks like and where in their body that it lives
- Consider taking it to the next level by having the kids draw some cartoon word bubbles by their "inner wisdom" and writing in some of the things they have heard their inner wisdom say to them.
- Finish by having them share their creations/drawings.

Sum It Up

"Let us remember this activity and the pictures you created. And when you need some help making a difficult decision or choice, be sure to bring it to mind, so you can more easily hear what it has to say."

Hands-On Activity: Where is Your Body Talking to You

This activity could take 20-40 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Activity Prep

Gather and set tape, mural paper cut to the length of the children, markers, and dot stickers

Set It Up

"This activity is going to help us pay attention to how the different parts of our bodies speak to us and what they might be saying."

Directions

Part 1

- Start by giving everyone a long piece of mural paper and then invite kids to pair up and trace each other.
- Invite kids to help their person come to life by drawing them a face, hair, and an outfit.
- Next, hang the tracings around the room

Part 2

- Give each child a sheet of dot stickers and explain that you will be calling out some things our body says to us. After you do, everyone should take a dot sticker and place it on their tracing to show what part of their body might be talking.
 - For example, the leader says, hungry and kids place a dot stick on the belly
 - Or the leader might say tired, and kids place stickers on their mouth for a yawn or on their eyes for if they get droopy when they are sleepy,

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this activity and its message to pay attention to how the different parts of our bodies speak to us.”

Activity: Listen to Your Heart

This activity should take 10 - 15 minutes and can be done with any number of children.

Set-Up & Materials

Gather and set out paper and pens, and a stopwatch.

Set It Up

“If I asked you what a heart is, what would you say? *(pause and allow time for kids to answer and validate each answer).*”

Many of us use the term “heart” to describe our feelings, our conscience, or our inner wisdom. Today, we are focusing on paying attention to that inner wisdom. So, for this next activity, we are going to learn how to listen to our heart, or at least our heartbeats, as we try out some different exercises and see what that does to our pulses.

Directions

- Begin by teaching everyone how to take their pulse.
 - *Put your index and middle fingers on a pulse area. Gently press down until you feel a pulsing “thump.” (Do not use your thumb.)*
 - *Set a timer for 30 seconds. When you feel the beat, count each little “thump.”*
 - *Write down the number you counted. Multiply it by 2 to get the number of beats per minute.*
[source](#)
- Once everyone understands how to take their pulse, invite kids into each of the below activities, and at the end of each, ask them to take their pulse and record their heartbeat. *After each physical activity below provide 1 minute to let their heart rate recover before starting the next activity.*
- **Activities:**
 - Sitting in a chair - relaxed
 - After walking in place around the room at a leisurely pace for 1 minute
 - After speed walking for 1 minute
 - After doing 25 jumping jacks
 - After running in place as fast as possible for 1 minute

Game: Listen To Your Heart Yes/No Game

This activity should take 10-15 minutes and needs at least 2+ kids

Activity Prep

Gather and set out one small candy bar or other token for each child.

Set It Up

“Did you know that your body was designed to connect with your heart? Every day, your heart sends you powerful messages, but you might miss them unless you have the time and space to pay attention.

When you think about saying yes when your heart says no, if you are paying attention, you can feel it in your body. You might clench your teeth, squeeze your hands, or feel stress where comfort or excitement should be. Perhaps you’ve ignored those outside signs of inside struggle, but they are there for you.

For example, sometimes it can be tough to pay attention and listen to your heart/your inner wisdom and say no to friends, especially if you are feeling pressure to say yes. So, our next game will help us practice listening to our hearts or our inner wisdom and not saying yes when our hearts say no.”

Directions

- Set a timer for how long you want to play the game. 5 minutes, for example.
- Give each person a piece of candy or some other token.
- On “go,” have the kids mingle and ask each other yes or no questions.
- If the person replies “No” to the question, the person who asked the question has to give all of the candy or tokens in their possession to the person who asked “No.”
- People without candy or tokens can continue asking questions to try to gain them back.
- When time is up, the person with the most tokens or candy wins.
- At the end of the game, explain that the game and the candy/tokens are a fun way to get rewarded for listening to your inner wisdom and saying no. Then, ask the group what some real-life rewards might come from listening to your heart and saying no, even when there is outside pressure to say yes.

Sum It Up

“Let us remember this activity and its message about how important it is to feel comfortable paying attention to our inner wisdom and saying ‘no’ when it feels like the right thing to do.”

Extinguish It!

We are Unitarian Universalists (open wide toward each other)
Who put love at the center of our lives (hands on heart)
As we extinguish our chalice (cup your hands like a chalice)
And as we go out into the world, (use finger to make a walking motion)
Let us remember to pay attention and listen (place hand near ear)
to the wisdom within (point to your chest/heart)

March Packet Stories At-a-Glance

To support leaders as they assemble a session that best fits their children's developmental needs, this section provides an overview of all the wisdom tales and storybooks in our RE packets each month.

Wisdom Tales (from the upper elementary packet)

- [What's In Your Cup?](#)
- [The Frog Prince](#)
- [Emily Stowe](#)
- [Lucy Stone](#)
- [The Framers' Luck](#)
- [Wash Your Bowl](#)
- [What if Water is God](#)
- [The Cracked Pot](#)
- [Listen to Your Heart](#)
- [The Lion and the Mouse](#)

Story Books (from the lower elementary & one room schoolhouse packet)

- Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson
- Stick and Stone by Beth Ferry
- [The Starfish Thrower](#)
- Malala's Magic Pencil by Malala Yousafzai
- Moody Cow by Kerry Lee MacLean
- What Does it Mean to Be Present? by Rana DiOrio
- All the Water in the World by George Ella Lyon
- Save Water Every Day by Mari Schuh
- Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia
- Wisdom Within by Allison Morgan

Soul Work Table Activities

Many congregations have a multi-sensory table in the sanctuary to support children, youth, and adults who find it easier to focus when their hands are busy. Some of our Christian cousins call it a “Prayground.” Read about how they approach it [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). In UU circles, the tables are often for all ages, meaning adults are invited to use it too. We love calling it “Soul Work Table,” but of course, feel free to give it whatever creative name you want.

- [Paying Attention Coloring Sheet](#)
- We also suggest using some of the creative activities from this packet and any other manipulatives you choose on your soul works table.

RE Companion Resources

2025 - 2026 Chalice Chapel Songbook

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qgnKOouVChrXydvCBz9laRCizCOkTHLc/view?usp=sharing>

This song book offers kid-friendly hymns that align with each of this year's spiritual theme for each month. This resource was created and generously shared with permission by DRE Dana Lundquist and RE volunteer Chris Wise from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh

- Sept Building Belonging - 1021 Lean on Me
- Oct Cultivating Compassion - #1031 May we be filled with loving kindness
- Nov Nurturing Gratitude - #402 From You I Receive
- Dec Choosing Hope - #1022 Open the Window
- Jan Practicing Resistance - # 1017 Building a New Way
- Feb Embodying Resilience - # 389 Gathered Here
- Mar Paying Attention - #1007 There's a River Flowing My Soul
- Apr Embracing Possibility - #1024 When the Spirit Says Do
- May Awakening Curiosity - #1003 Where Do We Come From?

Feeding Our Spirit: Exploring Our UU Values through Fun in the Kitchen

Unitarian Universalism calls us to live our values with creativity, experimentation, and joy. And what better way to explore those values than through cooking, conversation, and community? This additional companion resource explores and highlights our UU values in a fresh and delicious way: through the joys and creativity of cooking! Each session centers on one of our new UU values and is paired with an introduction, story options, thoughtful discussion prompts, and three hands-on recipes.

To Learn more:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HB0PmKUS7cMLKJi6Zmq8SopiCNLviMAWHxfDi9alavo/edit?usp=sharing>

To purchase:

https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/store/p945/RE_Summer_Feeding_Our_Spirit.html

Other Resources and Sources of Support

RE Leader Facebook Page

Don't forget about our RE Leader Support Facebook page. Here is where our colleagues post bulletin board pictures, share books, and ideas. It's a great ongoing source of support. Your colleagues are available to support you at the click of a button and with the ease of a post: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/545202255591601/>

Inspiration Facebook Page

Offer your teachers and parents spiritual nourishment and inspiration by encouraging them to join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page. Use the memes for your congregational FB page, as well: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Soul Matters Music Playlists

We create two different playlists on the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. Music connects us to the themes in a way like nothing else. Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month. Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).

Soulful Home Family Guides

Invite your parents to explore the themes at home with their family by subscribing to our monthly parent guides, **Soulful Home**. Here's the link to the Soulful Home page on our website: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home.html>.

Soul Matters RE Packet Author & Contributors

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Thanks to all the Soul Matters Religious Educators who send in suggestions for our monthly packets! Whenever you have stories, games, or activities you'd like to suggest, just email April at soulmattersre@gmail.com



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