

# Seven Experiences

## for children and youth in our Unitarian Universalist congregations

We adults hope to provide seven types of experience for children and youth in our Unitarian Universalist congregations:

1. **Worship:** our own Unitarian Universalist worship, with free and open hearts.
2. **Unitarian Universalism:** learning about our own history and tradition.
3. **Other traditions:** learning about Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and other important traditions.
4. **Being in relationship and in community**
5. **Social service and justice:** active participation in projects
6. **Cultivating right relationship:** with themselves, their bodies and the Earth.
7. **Reflection:** on their personal beliefs and life goals.

## Accepting and Caring

We adults hope to provide these experiences in a congregational community where children and youth feel accepted and cared for.

This acceptance and care are absolutely essential to nurturing and cultivating the seven experiences.

## Why we need the Seven Experiences

The Seven Experiences do two vital things for people of all ages.

1. The experiences help us understand and appreciate our changes of heart.
2. The experiences help cultivate positive, integrating changes of heart.

A congregation becomes more effective by encouraging a balance of these seven experiences.

## Changes of Heart - Examples

In our lives, we experience **constant changes of heart, both large and small.**

People of all ages experience these changes of heart.

Some changes are negative - when we lose someone we love, for example, or when someone betrays our trust. Some changes of heart are positive – when a new goal becomes clear to us, for example, or when a trusting relationship with someone new grows.

## Positive, integrating changes of heart

Sometimes these changes of heart are positive, and allow us to live in a more integrated way. These can be transformative moments of deep insight, or times when our mixture of feelings becomes much clearer.

**Our congregations exist in part to encourage these positive, integrating changes of heart, and to help people of all ages understand these changes.**

These positive, integrating changes include what are called spiritual or religious experiences.

## More on the Seven Experiences

For children and youth in our Unitarian Universalist congregations, we adults hope to provide seven types of experience.

**1. Experience of Unitarian Universalist worship.** We hope to offer our children and youth chances to experience our free and open-hearted worship in many forms. These include multi-generational worship, children's worship and youth worship. As they become teenagers, we hope our youth will prepare and direct worship themselves.

**2. Learning about our own Unitarian Universalist tradition.** We offer our children and youth chances to learn about our Unitarian Universalist tradition and history.

**3. Learning about other important religious traditions.** We hope our children and youth will learn about Judaism, Christianity, and other important religious and wisdom traditions. As they age, we hope they will contrast Unitarian Universalism with other traditions.

**4. Being in relationship and in community.** We hope to encourage our children and youth to learn and practice skills for working together and building mutuality. We encourage the use of group covenants. A covenant is a set of mutual promises people make in a group to help ensure the group works as we hope.

**5. Taking part in projects for social service and justice.** We encourage our young people to work cooperatively in social service and social justice projects. We hope this will help them learn more about themselves, their own feelings, and the world.

**6. Practices for cultivating right relationship with themselves, their bodies and the Earth.** The practices here might include active participation in yoga, Tai Chi, guided meditation, as well as music and movement.

**7. Reflection on their personal beliefs and life goals.** As they experience life and its many changes of heart, we encourage children and youth to refine and express their personal beliefs and goals in response to these changes. This becomes much more important as they become teenagers.