



In case of nothing
to do, break glass and then
sweep up broken glass.

Religious Education Emergency Lesson Plan Booklet

For Volunteers and Caregivers
Created in Response to Covid-19

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Booklet Introduction

Hello!

Dearest volunteer / parent / caregiver, these are difficult times and you are doing holy work. I know... I know... this sure does not *feel* like holy work. It feels like drudgery, like anxiety, like duty and due diligence. But, friend, who will care for the “interconnected web” if not you? When will we “learn together,” if not now? And, how will our children “build a fair and peaceful world,” if we don’t provide them with a foundation upon which to build? Indeed, your ministry is needed now, more than ever, and I am thankful you are here.

In this booklet, you will find six lessons (for children in Preschool through 5th grade), centered on five major themes. These lessons have been designed so that they can be used by a last minute volunteer (who is running a one-room-schoolhouse / Children’s Chapel) or by a parent/caregiver (who is providing religious education to their own children at home). That is to say, these lessons require little to no prep or materials. In each of these lessons, you will find...

- An Opening
- A Story
- An Activity

Please note that every story in this collection is a recording of me, re-telling a story from Faye Mogensen’s [Ancient Stories for Modern Times](#). If you are a volunteer who is planning on utilizing one of these lessons for a one-room-schoolhouse / children’s chapel, you might request that the video referenced in your lesson be shown during your congregation’s Time for All Ages. If that is not a possibility, or you are a parent/caregiver who is planning on utilizing one of these lessons from home, you will either need a copy of Mogensen’s book or internet access (and a screen large enough for everyone to view) so that you may present your chosen lesson in full.

For your convenience, the online resources which are referenced the most in this booklet have been hyperlinked. If you are accessing this booklet in print form, you can find all the hyperlinked resources by following the TinyURLs below...

- [Ancient Stories in Modern Times](https://tinyurl.com/yxyxaq5j): <https://tinyurl.com/yxyxaq5j> (inSpirit Bookstore); <https://tinyurl.com/yx8dbvvv> (Amazon)
- Worship Web App: <https://tinyurl.com/raz9fd2> (UUA Website—Follow links to your app store)
- “A Re-Telling” Playlist: <https://tinyurl.com/w7jfa29>

Wishing you good health and happiness!

In faith and service,

Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development, First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati

Story: The Blind Man

Theme: Forgiveness

And the Hunter

Opening

Light a candle or virtual chalice ([Worship Web App](#)) with the words below. Then, share Joys and Sorrows.

IN a world filled with the darkness of ignorance, let us bring the light of reason. In a world filled with the darkness of despair, may we share the light of hope. In a world filled with the darkness of hate, let us shine the light of love. —Douglas John Traversa, *“In a World Filled With Hate.”*

Story

If you have not already done so, show [A Re-telling of The Blind Man and The Hunter](#) by Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development at the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. If you have time, discuss the question posed by Meredith at the end of that video (or a question from Mogensen’s book) before moving onto the activity. Use the summary below as needed.

“The Blind Man and The Hunter” is a story from West Africa and Zimbabwe. In this story, a hunter gets married and is surprised to find his blind brother-in-law is a wonderful dancer. When the hunter asks his wife how this can be, she simply replies, “He sees with his ears.” For a number of days after the wedding, the hunter’s brother-in-law asks if he can join the hunter on the hunt. The hunter is reluctant, but finally agrees. The hunting ground is far away, and the path contains many dangers. The blind brother-in-law saves the hunter’s life several times. At the hunting ground, the hunter catches a small gray bird, while his blind brother-in-law captures a large rainbow bird. Thinking about how his wife would love the rainbow bird, the hunter switches his bird with his blind brother-in-law’s. Walking home, the hunter asks his blind brother-in-law, “You are so clever, tell me why, when there is so much beauty in this world, that there is also hatred and war?” After a moment, the blind brother-in-law replies, “Strife and war are caused by the kind of dishonesty and greed that you have just displayed.” The hunter, overcome with shame, switches the birds back. Then, after a moment, asks, “How is it that war can ever end?” His blind brother-in-law answers with a smile, “Strife disappears and peace returns when people learn from their mistakes and change their ways, just as you have just done.” After that day, whenever anyone asked the hunter how it was that his blind brother-in-law was so wise, the hunter replied, “Because he sees with his ears, and hears with this heart.”

Activity

Materials...

- Several Small Objects (e.g. buttons, post-its, pens, etc.)
- Forgiveness Meditation (next page)

Instructions...

To play this game, show everyone the small objects you collected. Ask one person to hide the objects in a room, while everyone else closes their eyes. When the hider says “Go” everyone should try and find the objects that have been hidden. After playing several rounds, note: Objects, if lost, can be found. This is true of intangible things (like honest and respect), too. It just takes forgiveness. Use the next page to practice a Forgiveness Meditation.

Story: The Blind Man

Theme: Forgiveness

And the Hunter

Forgiveness Meditation

Adapted from the website A View on Buddhism: <https://tinyurl.com/wmsajfx>

Picture yourself in your mind. As you breathe in and out, repeat these words silently to yourself and feel the warmth of the healing within you:

I forgive myself for whatever I did, on purpose or by accident.

May I be happy, free of confusion, understand myself and the world.

May I help others to be happy, free of confusion, and full of understanding.

Now picture in your mind a person you love and want to forgive. As you breathe in and out, repeat these words silently to yourself and feel the warmth of the healing between you:

From my heart, I forgive you for whatever you did, on purpose or by accident.

May you be happy, free of confusion, and understand yourself and the world.

Please forgive me for whatever I did to you, on purpose or by accident.

May we open our hearts and minds to meet in love and understanding.

Now picture in your mind someone you have hurt. As you breathe in and out, repeat these words silently to yourself and feel the warmth of the healing between you:

Please forgive me for whatever I did to you, on purpose or by accident.

May you be happy, free of confusion, and understand yourself and the world.

Please forgive me for whatever I did to you, on purpose or by accident.

May we open our hearts and minds to meet in love and understanding.

Now picture in your mind a person you do not like very much. As you breathe in and out, repeat these words silently to yourself and feel the warmth of the healing between you:

Please forgive me for whatever I did to you, on purpose or by accident.

May you be happy, free of confusion, and understand yourself and the world.

Please forgive me for whatever I did to you, on purpose or by accident.

May we open our hearts and minds to meet in love and understanding.

Story: The Shinning Jewel

Theme: Change

Opening

Light a candle or virtual chalice ([Worship Web App](#)) with the words below. Then, share Joys and Sorrows.

We light this chalice in memory of the courage of those who have struggled for freedom, the persistence of those who've struggled for justice, and the love of those who've built beloved communities to carry on the light of hope. —Paul Sprecher, *The Struggle for Freedom.*"

Story

If you have not already done so, show [A Re-telling of The Shinning Jewel](#) by Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development at the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. If you have time, discuss the question posed by Meredith at the end of that video (or a question from Mogensen's book) before moving onto the activity. Use the summary below as needed.

"The Shinning Jewel" is a story from Finland. In this story, the Skolt Sami live by the sea. In the summer, it is joyful, but winter is a challenge. Tradition among the Skolt Sami dictates elders must move onto the next life when they enter the "autumn" of their lives, but the youth want this tradition to change. Ontri is an elder and he insists he must go. However, Ontri's son, Alexei, insists Ontri must stay. To prove his commitment to his father, Alexei carries his father to a cave where Ontri won't be seen by any of the other villagers, and begins caring for him. As the days past, Ontri is surprised to realize he longs to live. Then, one night, a fearsome storm strikes. A part of the cliff face falls into the sea. The next day, young men, start diving into the sea, one after the other, searching for the shinning jewel that fell into the sea overnight. Only Ontri, from his position on the cliff, can see what is really happening. They young men are chasing a reflection. Ontri yells at the young men to stop. Alexei is the first to hear him. As Alexei looks up, he sees the jewel in the cliff, and his father. Alexei goes to thank his father. And, upon realizing that he still has much to contribute to his family, Ontri agrees to return home.

Activity

Materials...

- Masking Tape
- In My Control / Out of My Control Strips (next page)
- Scissors

Instructions...

Change can be overwhelming. A healthy way to deal with change is to know what is in your control, and what is out of your control. Make two concentric circles (or boxes) on the ground with the masking tape. Next, cut out the In My Control / Out of My Control strips and give one to each person. To play this game, everyone should stand within throwing distance to the circles (or boxes). One person should read their strip (or ask someone to read it for them) and then they should state if they think this is something in their control, or out of their control. After a group discussion, that person should then crumple up their piece of paper and throw it at the concentric circles. If their strip of paper was an "in my control" strip, they should aim for the inner circle. If their strip of paper was an "out of my control" strip, they should aim for the outer circle. Afterwards, the group should discuss what they learned.

Story: The Shinning Jewel

Theme: Change

<u>In My Control</u>	<u>Out of My Control</u>
My Level of Honesty	What Others Say
How Well I Prepare	What Others Do
How I Act on My Feelings	What Others Feel
What I Spend My Money On	Natural Disasters
How I Interpret Situations	Traffic
Whether or Not I Ask for Help	War
How I Talk to Yourself	World Hunger
How I Structure My Day	Who is in My Family
How I Practice Self-Care	Death
My Boundaries	Being Born
What I Regret	Weather
How Well I Communicate My Needs	My Skin Color
What I Spend My Time On	Growing Up / Old
How Flexible I Am	Disability / Mental Illness
How Grateful I Am	The Future
How I Treat My Body	Cats
How Much I Care About Others	My Health
How Willing I Am To Try New Things	My Past
Dogs	Most of Life

Story: Hole Boy

Theme: Hope

Opening

Light a candle or virtual chalice ([Worship Web App](#)) with the words below. Then, share Joys and Sorrows.

During our darkest moments, still, there is hope. When facing our biggest challenges, still, there is hope. When all we can do is put one foot in front of the other, still, there is hope. When we can't find the way out, still, there is hope. When all we can do to help is hold someone's hand as they cry, still, there is hope. We are the hope—for ourselves and for one another. Always, there is hope.—*Nadine McSpadden, "Still There is Hope."*

Story

If you have not already done so, show [A Re-telling of Hole Boy](#) by Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development at the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. If you have time, discuss the question posed by Meredith at the end of that video (or a question from Mogensen's book) before moving onto the activity. Use the summary below as needed.

"Hole Boy" (with an "H") is an adaptation of "Half Boy," a story told by the Tempasuk Dusuns of North Borneo. In the story, there is a boy who feels as if he is full of holes. The holes make him feel sad and angry. He responds to these feelings by making trouble for others. One woman who has compassion encourages Hole Boy to go on a journey to search for someone like himself. Hole Boy is confused by the kind woman's words, but he also feels hopeful for the first time. So, Hole Boy sets out on a journey. It is a difficult journey, with many dangers. He passes through a number of villages until, finally, he finds Holy Boy. Hole Boy and Holy Boy recognize themselves in each other. At first, they aren't sure what to make of each other, but they feel drawn together. Eventually, they begin wrestling. They wrestle all through the night, creating a big storm of dust. When the sun rises the next day, the dust finally settles, and out came one *Whole* Boy (with a "W"). Whole Boy finds his way back home—the journey is no longer dangerous. When he arrives at his village, he is comforted to find the kind woman with compassion was waiting for him. She welcomes him back home with open arms.

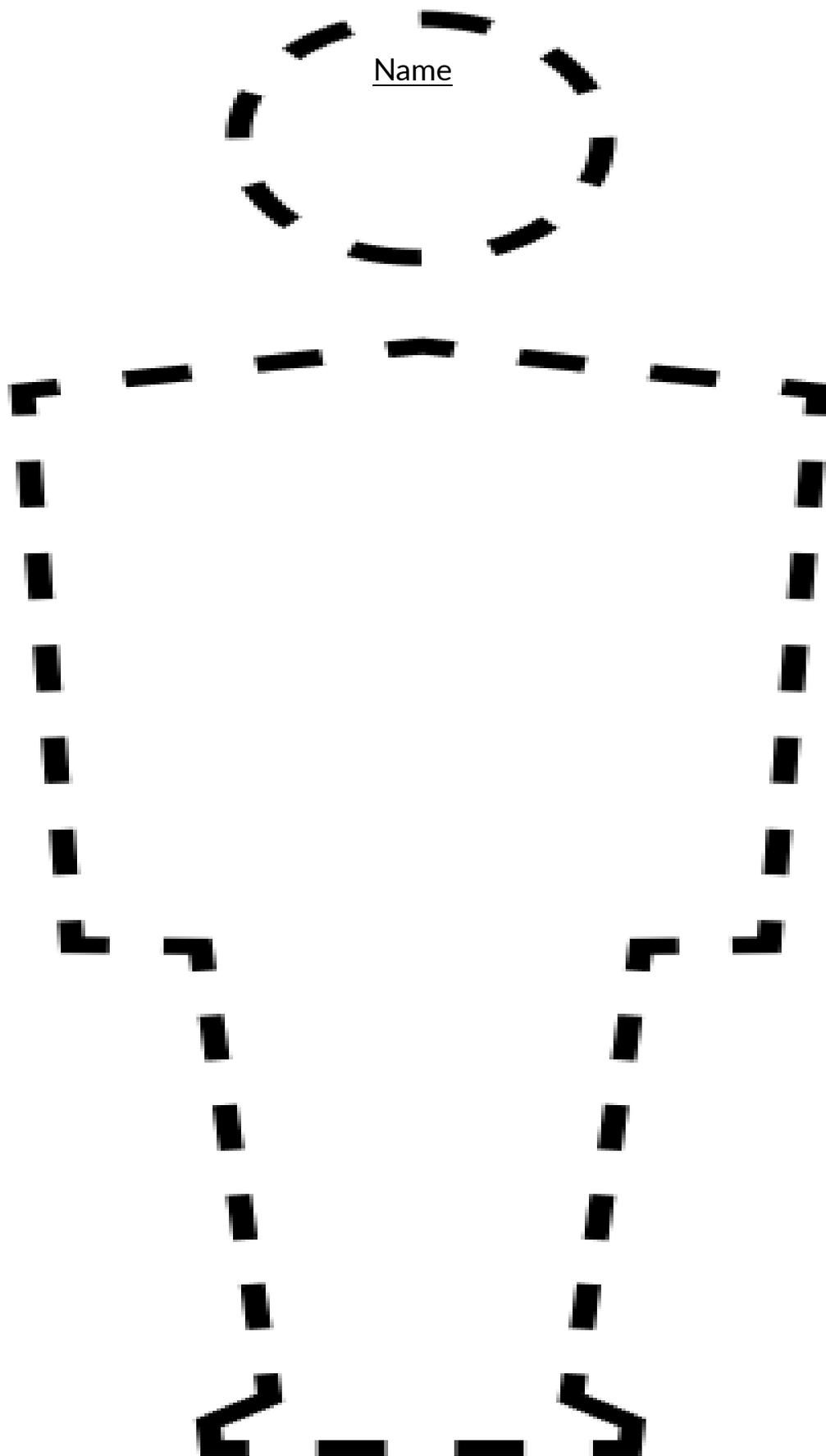
Activity

Materials...

- Person Picture (on the next page—make multiple copies as needed)
- Markers / Crayons / Colored Pencils
- Magazines (Optional)
- Scissors (Optional)
- Tape / Glue Stick (Optional)

Instructions...

When you feel empty inside, what helps you feel whole again? What helps you feel better when you are feeling sad or angry? How do you find hope in hard times? Do you like to talk? Snuggle? Be by yourself? Fill in the picture on the next page with drawings of what makes you feel whole, or cut and tape/glue pictures from a magazine. Share with an adult in your life.



Story: The Meat of the Tongue

Theme: Connection

Opening

Light a candle or virtual chalice ([Worship Web App](#)) with the words below. Then, share Joys and Sorrows.

At this hour, in small towns and big cities, in single rooms and ornate sanctuaries, many of our sibling Unitarian Universalist congregations are also lighting a flaming chalice. As we light our chalice today, let us remember that we are part of a great community of faith. May this dancing flame inspire us to fill our lives with the Unitarian Universalist ideals of love, justice and truth.—*Judith L. Quarles, “A Community of Faith.”*

Story

If you have not already done so, show [A Re-telling of The Meat of the Tongue](#) by Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development at the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. If you have time, discuss the question posed by Meredith at the end of that video (or a question from Mogensen’s book) before moving onto the activity. Use the summary below as needed.

“The Meat of the Tongue” is a Swahili story from Medieval East Africa. In this story, a sultan lives in an ornate palace on the coast. The sultan loves showering his sultana in luxurious clothes and jewels. However, the sultana is struggling. Her once rosy cheeks are pale, and she is listless. The sultan calls on all his royal advisors and doctors, but they have no cure. However, they have heard a rumor—the poor fisherman’s wife is thriving. The sultan orders the royal advisors to seek out the poor fisherman and discover his secret. The poor fisherman tells the advisors the secret is “the meat of the tongue.” The sultan orders his cooks to prepare different kinds of tongue meat, but the sultana continues to struggle. The sultan then requests the sultana live with the poor fisherman, and in exchange, the poor fisherman’s wife can live in the palace. It isn’t long until the fisherman’s wife is unhappy. However, the sultana appears to be thriving. The Sultan, confused, the poor fisherman explains, “surely your [advisors] did not think I meant the meat of an animal’s tongue? My wife flourishes because in the evening we sit together, sharing nourishment in the form of jokes and songs and stories.” The sultan vows to change his ways. At first, it is awkward, but eventually, both the sultan and sultana grow happier as they connect with each other.

Activity

Materials...

- Song Lyrics and Action Steps (on the next page—make multiple copies as needed)
- Internet access (optional—so leaders can learn the song)

Instructions...

We can connect with one-another right here and now by sharing a silly song with each other! On the next page you will find the lyrics and action steps to the song “Hi, my name is Joe.” Anyone who has participated in the scouts may know this song. Anyone who doesn’t know this song can see and hear it performed here: <https://tinyurl.com/vhwo7rk>

Story: The Meat of the Tongue

Theme: Connection

Song Lyrics and Actions

Hi, My name is Joe

And I work in a button factory,

I've got a wife and ____ kid(s),

One day my boss said to me

Are you busy, Joe?

I said no,

He said push this button with your _____.

1. One... Left hand

- Mimic pushing a button with your left hand

2. Two... Right Hand

- Continue pushing button #1, and mimic pushing a button with your right hand

3. Three... Left Foot

- Continue pushing button #1 & 2, and mimic pushing a button with your left foot

4. Four... Right Foot

- Continue pushing button #1, 2, & 3, and mimic pushing a button with your right foot

5. Five... Butt

- Continue pushing button #1, 2, 3, & 4, and mimic pushing a button with your butt

6. (Next Number)... (Child's Choice)

- Continue pushing all previous buttons, and mimic the action suggested by the child

7. (Next to Last Number)... Tongue

- Continue pushing all previous buttons, and mimic pushing a button with your tongue
-

Hi, My name is Joe

And I work in a button factory,

I've got a wife and (Last Number) kid(s),

One day my boss said to me

Are you busy, Joe?

I said "Yes!"

Story: The Monkey Who Asked for Misery

Theme: Appreciation

Opening

Light a candle or virtual chalice ([Worship Web App](#)) with the words below. Then, share Joys and Sorrows.

Recognizing the beauty around us and within us, in voice and spirit, we gather to light our chalice. May we savor the beauty of our abundance and diversity, always cherishing one another and our earth. May we remember to inhale the lushness in life knowing that we are a people of beauty—*Kimberlee Anne Tomczak Carlson, "We Are a People of Beauty."*

Story

If you have not already done so, show [A Re-telling of The Monkey Who Asked for Misery](#) by Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development at the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. If you have time, discuss the question posed by Meredith at the end of that video (or a question from Mogensen's book) before moving onto the activity. Use the summary below as needed.

"The Monkey Who Asked for Misery" is a story from Haiti. In this story, a monkey sits atop a tree when he sees a woman walking with a pot full of syrup. The woman trips and calls out "Misery!" as her pot smashes to the ground, spilling all of her syrup. Monkey is curious and tastes the syrup. He likes the taste of "misery." When Monkey asks Papa God for more misery, Papa God questions him, does Monkey really want misery? But, Monkey is adamant, he wants more misery. So, Papa God gives Monkey a sack of "misery" and tells him to walk until he is far away from all trees. With the promise of "misery" Monkey obeys, but is surprised when he opens the sack and two snarling dogs leap out. The dogs chase Monkey until he is able to make it back to the trees, at which point, he climbs safely to the top. When Monkey asks Papa God "why?" Papa God responds, "Oh Monkey, don't you know you've got to be careful what you ask for! Nobody deserves that much misery!"

Activity

Materials...

- Phone / Camera
- Scavenger Hunt (Optional)

Instructions...

It is easy to lose appreciation for the things and the people in your life when you are around them all day, every day. Pause and take this moment to really look around you. Capture all that you have to be grateful for in pictures, and post to social media. If you are doing this activity in a group, have one person (you) handle the phone/camera. Do not let anyone else handle the phone/camera. Instead, invite the people in your group to point out what they are grateful for (the phone/camera person can take pictures of the noted items/people). You can use the Scavenger Hunt on the next page for guidance if you would like.

Story: The Monkey who Asked for Misery

Theme: Appreciation

Scavenger Hunt

I am grateful for...

- ◇ things that make me laugh out loud.
- ◇ my family/friends.
- ◇ food.
- ◇ clothes.
- ◇ a favorite place to relax.
- ◇ things that make my life easier.
- ◇ animal friends.
- ◇ having time to do my favorite at-home/at-church activity.
- ◇ stories.
- ◇ nature.

Story: Grandfather

Theme: Love

And Grandson

Opening

Light a candle or virtual chalice ([Worship Web App](#)) with the words below. Then, share Joys and Sorrows.

As we light this chalice [this evening], may it serve to give us clarity of purpose and illuminate our way as we set about doing the work of this congregation, in commitment, in cooperation, and in love. —*Viola Abbitt, "Work in Commitment and Love"*

Story

If you have not already done so, show [A Re-telling of Grandfather and Grandson](#) by Meredith Plummer, Director of Lifespan Faith Development at the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati. If you have time, discuss the question posed by Meredith at the end of that video (or a question from Mogensen's book) before moving on to the activity. Use the summary below as needed.

Versions of "Grandfather and Grandson" have been told across cultures. In this story, an old grandfather move in with his son and daughter-in-law. While there, he becomes less capable. One day, Grandfather knocks over a soup bowl, one too many times. The bowl breaks, the soup spills, and the contexts stain the table cloth. This is too much for the daughter-in-law. That evening, she shares her grievances with her husband. She insists her father-in-law use a wooden bowl and spoon from now on. Her husband agrees. Then, the husband and wife discover their son searching for wood. He wants to carve wooden bowls in preparing for their old age. The husband and wife instantly regret their behavior. They remember that love means compassion. They drop all talk about wooden bowls and spoons.

Activity

Materials...

- Music Player or Speaker
- Your Favorite Music or Internet Access
- Pillows / Bean Bags / Bed
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (next page)

Instructions...

There are all kinds of love in this world. How often do you practice self-love? Practice it today. Que up your favorite music, or if you are leading a group of children, hook up a speaker to a device with internet access and load this Disney playlist: <https://tinyurl.com/ybes7lrr> Invite everyone to lie down in a comfortable position. Use the Progressive Muscle Relaxation on the next page to help everyone relax.

Story: Grandfather

Theme: Love

And Grandson

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Take a deep breath through your abdomen, hold for a few second, and exhale slowly.

Again, as you breathe notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air. And again inhale... and exhale.

Feel your body already relaxing. As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing. Now let's begin...

Tighten the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold for about five seconds. And abruptly release feeling that tension fall away. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now smile widely, feel your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Next, squint your eyelids tightly shut. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Now, tightly, but without straining, clench your fists. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Now, flex your biceps. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Now extend your arms out and lock your elbows. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Now lift your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for 5 seconds, and release, feeling. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Clench your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Tighten your chest by taking a deep breath in, hold for 5 seconds, and exhale.

Now tighten the muscles in your stomach. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Gently arch your lower back. Hold for 5 seconds, relax. Pause for 10 seconds.

Tighten your bottom. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Tighten your thighs by pressing your knees together. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you. Hold for 5 seconds, and relax, feel. Pause for 10 seconds.

Curl your toes under, tensing your feet. Hold for 5 seconds, and release. Pause for 10 seconds.

Now imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading through your body beginning at your head and going all the way down to your feet. Feel the weight of your relaxed body, sinking into the floor. Breathe in...and out... in...out....in...out.