



COMING OF AGE
for Adults

Faith Forward: From Visitor to Leader
Sample Session



First Unitarian Church of Dallas

Coming of Age for Adults (Updated March 2024)
Part of the *Faith Forward: From Visitor to Leader*
ADVANCED Path



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This program and additional resources are available at www.dallasuu.org

Coming of Age...for Adults?

Session 1

SESSION OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand that “coming of age” is something that occurs throughout adulthood, and not only in early adolescence.
- Learn about the hero journey, as illustrated in three popular films, and relate it to where they are in their adult life now.
- Experience coming of age as a journey inward and outward.

OVERVIEW

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
Chalice Lighting	3
Introduction	7
Check-In	10
Covenant-Building	5
Video	10
Discussion	20
Activity	15
Closing	5

MATERIALS FOR SESSION

- Chalice, candle, and lighter
- Videos, TV/projector, and laptop with internet access
 - Video #1 – COA for Adults Intro Video
 - Video #2 – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkhNBJUQRzI>
- Session 1 Slideshow
- Flipchart and/or white board
- Questions for discussion written on flipchart or white board
- Handouts: The Hero Journey, Finger Labyrinth, Session 1 Reflection Question

- **If offering online:** These handouts are included in the slideshow. Share the handout files in the Zoom chat and by email as well.
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Optional: #1003 “Where Do We Come From” from *Singing the Journey* OR a video recording of this hymn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7zEwa1XqUk>

CHALICE LIGHTING (3 MINUTES)

If offering online: Share the Chalice Lighting slide so that everyone can participate in the opening words.

Light the chalice (or ask a participant to light it) and read the following:

Growing up is the hardest thing we'll ever do. And it really is all we ever do. We move through each stage – learning all we can, then figuring out what's important and what can be left behind. We look for counsel, we resist advice, we acquire everything we think is important and load our baggage, and then we struggle trying to carry backpacks too heavy. We unload, we go on, and maybe later we find out that what we left was what we needed and what we brought is not helpful. And so we start again. Learning, acquiring, sorting through the packing, leaving stuff behind, choosing pathways, feeling bound, feeling alone, feeling crowded in.

As each of us grows – through childhood to adolescence to adulthood, through stages of discovery and mastery of each stage of our lives – we encounter the challenges of casting off clothes which no longer fit us, of knowing ourselves anew, of feeling our own worth, and of finding what freedom really means.

And it seems to me that we go through it over and over – the journey is not a single continuous path. We continually repeat the cycle of feeling free, becoming encumbered, striving to understand and to learn more, then freeing ourselves again, until finally we can know ourselves, become ourselves.

- Rev. Linda Olson Peebles

INTRODUCTION: What is COA for Adults? (7 MINUTES)

Show the video featuring Rev. Daniel Kanter, who introduces “Coming of Age for Adults” and talks about what it means for us as Unitarian Universalists.

If offering online: Have the video file already pulled up before class begins. Share your screen, select the window that has the video, and click the box next to “Share sound.”

Facilitators briefly introduce themselves and why they are excited to facilitate COA for Adults.

COA for Adults is a six-session series designed for adults of all ages to explore our spiritual journey and religious identity. We will reflect on how we got to *now*, engage with texts as they relate to our spiritual lives, and each of us will craft a statement of faith about who we are as a person of faith. We encourage you to attend all sessions, as they build on each other and lead us through a journey inward of exploration and outward to share our faith. Each session is 75-minutes long, to allow space for deep work.

CHECK-IN (10 MINUTES)

Ask participants to introduce themselves by sharing:

1. Name
2. How long they have been a Unitarian Universalist
3. What they hope to get from participating in COA for Adults

If offering online: Share the check-in slide for this session. With a large group, use the Zoom chat for check-in. With a smaller group, spoken check-in is doable within the time allotted. The facilitator should call on people in the order they appear on the facilitator’s screen or call on the first person and then have each of them call on the next person when they’re done.

COVENANT BUILDING (5 MINUTES)

Read or share the following in your own words:

Coming of Age for Adults asks us to be open and reflective, to delve deeply into our souls and to share some of what we find with others. Therefore, it is important that we begin by asking, “How

do we want to be together?” and by creating a group covenant. Covenants help guide our interactions through promises we make to one another.

Lead a short brainstorm addressing the following question: What can we do to create a respectful environment that promotes growth and encourages all to engage and share?

Some examples of covenant promises could be:

- Share from experience, rather than making generalizations
- Listen to one another deeply
- Make space, take space (a post-ableist adaptation of “step up, step back” to balance those who are eager to speak and those who are reticent)
- Be open to learning
- Assume best intent, attend to impact

Encourage the group to frame the covenant in positive statements. Record the covenant promises on a flipchart or white board, to be visible in each session going forward.

If offering online: Share the Covenant Building slide. With a large group, use the Zoom chat for covenant input. With a smaller group, brainstorm aloud and type the participants’ ideas into the text box on the slide. Compile the covenant brainstorm into a document and send it to participants after class.

VIDEO: The Hero Journey (10 MINUTES)

Read or share the following in your own words:

In this video, you will hear about the Hero Journey, as illustrated in three popular films – Star Wars, Harry Potter, and the Wizard of Oz. The Hero Journey is a mythological archetype popularized by Joseph Campbell, a mythologist and writer of comparative mythology and comparative religion. While Campbell’s “Hero Journey” involves 17 stages, this video presents a simplified version of the journey.

The Hero Journey is one lens for exploring the growth and change that occurs in our adult lives. It is a narrative involving a hero who embarks on an adventure, finds themselves in a crisis, wins, and then returns home changed or transformed. While we may not experience anything quite as dramatic or triumphant as the heroes of common myths, many of us experience something like it. As you watch the video, think about where you relate to the narrative.

Play the video available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkhNBJUQRzI>.

If offering online: Have the video file already pulled up before class begins. Share your screen, select the window that has the video, and click the box next to “Share sound.”

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Distribute the handout – The Hero Journey. Point out that the stages of the journey described in the handout align with what they saw in the video.

If offering online: The text of this handout is included in the slideshow. Share the handout file in the Zoom chat as well.

Tell participants to break into pairs with someone they didn’t know before this class, and give them 5 minutes each to share their responses to these questions:

1. How has the coming of age / hero journey played out in your adult life? Are you at one of these stages right now?
2. Who are the mentors that have helped you through the challenges of the journey, and who helped you move into a new stage of maturity?
3. What happened after the journey was over? How did it continue, and in what ways was it complete?

If offering online: Show the discussion questions in the slideshow as you explain the activity. Give groups of 2 people 10 minutes in breakout rooms for this discussion. Copy/paste the discussion questions in the chat and send to the breakout rooms.

After 10 minutes of pair-sharing, return to the whole group and invite the pairs to share highlights and insights from their conversation.

ACTIVITY: Labyrinth (15 MINUTES)

Labyrinths are used in many religious traditions for meditation. They can be inside or outside on the ground, or on paper such as in this activity. Distribute the handout – Finger Labyrinth.

If offering online: This handout is included in the slideshow. Share the handout file in the Zoom chat as well. Invite participants to follow the finger labyrinth on their screen.

Explain that when “walking” a labyrinth, there is a movement within for listening and reflection, and then a movement out. As you trace the labyrinth inward, imagine that you’re going deep into who you are – your religious identity. Pay attention to what you find along the way, and what you find at the center. What does it feel like to wind your way in, and to wind your way out?

Read the words of Rev. Leslie Takahashi:

Walk the maze

Within your heart: guide your steps into its questioning curves.

This labyrinth is a puzzle leading you deeper into your own truths.

Listen in the twists and turns.

Listen in the openness within all searching.

Listen: a wisdom within you calls to a wisdom beyond you and in that dialogue lies peace.

Give participants the remaining time to “walk” their labyrinth. If they finish early, they can sit silently in prayer/meditation, or write reflections in a journal.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

At the conclusion of each session, the facilitators distribute a handout with a reflection question or “assignment” for participants to engage with between this session and the next. There is no way to include all of the hoped-for reflection within a 75-minute session, so the reflection questions/assignments are an opportunity for participants to extend their engagement beyond the group session time. Distribute the handout – Reflection Question – and read through it with the group.

If offering online: This handout is included in the slideshow. Share the handout file in the Zoom chat as well.

Optional Closing: Much of COA for Adults is about past, present, and future – exploring the journey we are on, and where we are now. “Where Do We Come From?” #1003 in *Singing the Journey*, is a four-part chant that expresses this message. It is based on the words of artist Paul Gaugin. Sing this through a few times as a closing and/or listen to the YouTube video provided - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7zEwa1XqUk>.

If offering online: Have the video file already pulled up before class begins. Share your screen, select the window that has the video, and click the box next to “Share sound.”

If offering online: Share the Closing slide so that everyone can participate in the closing words.

Thank everyone for their participation in this session, let them know when the next one is, and extinguish the chalice with these words:

*We extinguish this chalice flame
But not the light of our faith,
Or the learning and growth begun here.
May it shine in our minds and hearts,
And guide us on our way,
Today and all days until we meet again.*

- Rev. Beth Dana

The Hero Journey

Call to Adventure – Something happens that enlivens your imagination and calls you in a new direction.

Refusal of the Call – You refuse to go because you are scared of the risks or feel inadequate for the call.

Crossing the Threshold – You summon the courage to embark on the adventure.

Path of Trials – You face challenges, fears, and temptations to quit, which force you to grow.

New Friends – They accompany and support you on the journey.

Wise Person/Mentor – They offer advice and show you the way. There is often an experience of love – romantic, familial, friend, or divine.

Enemies and Challenges – You face external or internal obstacles.

New Skills – You develop new ways of being, interacting, and communicating.

Personal Insight – You receive the gift of new knowledge about yourself and the world.

Your Return – You return to the world from which you came, but you have changed. You must remember what you learned on the journey and use it to make a difference in your life and the lives of others.

Master of Two Worlds – You have learned how to bridge two worlds – the everyday world and the world of adventure, your inner world and the rest of the world.

COA for Adults – Session 1, Handout 2
Finger Labyrinth



Reflection Question

Reading for Reflection (Rev. Alan Taylor, author): Children, as they grow into adolescents, metamorphose from dogs into cats. Whereas children love to be companioned, play, get in your face, run around, and generally have a fun time, somehow they gradually become less interested in all those things. They shed their inveterately happy, energetic selves. It's as if in the first decade of parenting you have a puppy to take care of, a puppy who constantly expresses love for you and takes all the attention you can humanly muster. And then, somewhere in the second decade of parenting, the darling little creature becomes emotionally aloof, regularly retreats to his or her bedroom or friends, no longer likes being hugged or kissed goodnight, and wants full control over when and how to be interacted with by the parents. If you've been the owner of a cat, as I have, you know that cats refuse to be told what to do. They strut away, sometimes contemptuously, when someone tries to give them attention. Cats often are very particular about for whom they'll show affection. I imagine many of you parents know this canine to feline shift.

Question for Reflection: What animal are you at this stage of your adult life?

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