



South Fraser Unitarians

*What does it mean to be a
People of Play?*



SFUC Thematic Packet
May and June 2021

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What Does It Mean to Be a People of Play?

We all are playing.

Playing it up, playing it down, trying to play fair.

Playing for keeps, playing favorites, playing it safe,
sometimes too safe.

He plays hardball; They're playing house; I'm playing it by ear,
or at least learning to play it by ear.

She's tired of playing second fiddle; He's playing right into their hands.

Please God, can't we all just throw out the playbook and start again?

Sometimes we're just played out; it's not always bad to play possum.

And what about playing with fire?

Let's hope so friends.

Don't you want to feel again that burning within,
and let it loose?

Welcome to the month of play. May we all take it seriously!

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A – Leaning into Indigenous Spirituality

Explore the Seven Teachings. Maybe consider one for each day of the week. Reflect on the attributes of the teaching and the animal connected with each. Maybe print and post the attached picture so you see and reflect on it daily. Listen to the versions of William Prince's song 7.

The 7 Teachings: Love, Respect Honesty, Bravery, Wisdom, Truth, and Humility

- **Love:** Knowing love is to know peace.
- **Respect:** A way to honor creation is by showing respect. No part of creation is excluded.
- **Humility:** Humility is to know that we are a part of creation. It includes compassion, calmness, meekness, gentleness, and patience.
- **Bravery:** Facing a problem with integrity is a true demonstration of bravery.
- **Wisdom:** The mixture of these teachings, combined with the experiences of life, is what we refer to as wisdom.
- **Honesty:** Allow truth to be our guide. Walk through life with integrity.

- **Truth:** We know who we are in our heart. By knowing that, we also know the truth. Our emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual gifts will guide each one of us in our journey.



William Prince – 7 This is a song based on the 7 Grandfather Teachings

Recorded Version <https://tinyurl.com/ux73czx>

Live version at an elementary school in Winnipeg <https://tinyurl.com/9a6xst65>

Live version at a club <https://tinyurl.com/dbvx4bcr>

Option B - Do It, Don't Just Talk About It!

Why talk about play when we can do it?! That's right, this exercise invites your group to carve out some time to play together. Sometimes we get so lost in thinking about the benefits of play *for individuals* that we lose sight of play's core gift: it connects us! It's an entirely different way of being together, one that helps us deepen relationships and understand each other in a way that few other things can.

So, is your group willing to give it a try? Just set aside the first hour of your meeting and play a game. And to make it easier, we've pulled together a bunch of simple and fun games for you to choose from. Check them out at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MhV8dVjpxyrHsHbFmifLlQYwdDhuCn14or3fusOE3J8/edit?usp=sharing>

Option C - Skip the Games and Tell a Joke

Games are great but who doesn't love to tell and hear jokes?! Play together by having everyone hunt down, bring in and tell two of their best jokes!

Now be careful; this is trickier than it may seem. You might already know your two ringers. Good for you. You could certainly leave it at that. But an alternative might be to spend a week asking your family and friends what their favorite jokes are and then picking your two favorites from those choices! This way you get to play at receiver and teller of the joke!

Option D - Go On a Playdate

This is another way to actually play rather than just talk about it all month: Ask your partner or friend to go on a “play date.” What makes up that play date is up to you. That’s half the fun! And half the exploration. By deciding together what to do, you might discover something entirely new about how your partner or friend defines play and fun.

While you need to figure it out for yourself, here are some ideas to spark your imagination: Get lost on purpose, [axe throwing](#), a mini road trip, giving paddle boarding a try, hit the golf driving range, fly a kite, play [cornhole](#), mini golf or better yet frisbee golf. Or maybe make it a double or triple play date and invite over other couples to play [The Newlywed or Best Friend Game](#).

Option E – Playing with Your UU Elevator Speech

In his “*Our Calling*” column in the March/April issue, Rev. William G. Sinkford wrote, “I always encourage people to work on their elevator speech, what you’d say when you’re going from the sixth floor to the lobby and somebody asks you, ‘What’s a Unitarian Universalist?’”

Over the next couple of months, you’re invited to play with your UU elevator speech and come to your group to share it and to share how you found the process of creating it.

Option F - Widening the Circle of Concern

Join Rev. Samaya on Saturdays from 1-2 pm with your Black Lives Matter signs or any other sign promoting racial justice. For one hour we stand in front of Sunnyside United Church, our usual service location when it’s safe to meet in person, letting our community know that we take our mission statement seriously to heart when we say that we care by working for a just and sustainable world.

Come to your group ready to share what the experience meant to you and how it helps to widen the circle of concern you have for the world.

Option G - Find Play in Our Recommended Resources

Engaging our recommended resources and finding the one that especially speaks to you is a spiritual practice in and of itself. So, if none of the above exercises call to you, set aside some time to go through the recommended resource section of this packet and meditate on them until you find the one that most expands or deepens your understanding of play. After you’ve found it, consider printing it out and carrying it with you or pinning it up so you can continue to reflect on it

throughout the weeks leading up to your group meeting. Come to your group ready to share where the journey led you.

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of blessing means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"? Where is that question trying to lead you?

1. Does one of the 7 Teachings hold particular importance for you?
2. Is there anything you would add to the list of 7 Teachings offered by Indigenous elders?
3. What makes something play for you? When you feel free from the burden of producing an outcome? When is creativity involved? When you lose time? When you can just be yourself? All of the above? Something else?
4. What forms of childhood play have lasted into your adulthood? What has enabled that? What makes you especially grateful for it?
5. What did you learn from the games you played as a child? Monopoly, King of the Hill and Dodge Ball certainly instill different lessons than Red Light; Green Light, Clue, Jump-Rope, Pictionary or Hopscotch. What lessons from your favorite childhood games do you notice "playing out" for you in the present?
6. What is the opposite of play?
7. Can worship be play?
8. Can play lead to transcendence?
9. Can play be a form of political resistance?
10. When has play saved or healed you?
11. Who keeps you playful?
12. What would it look like to sneak a bit of playfulness into your daily chores? Your dinner prep? Morning commute? Exercise routine? Workday? Your relationship?
13. Do you remember "a perfect day of play"?
14. Are you a good winner? How about a good loser?
15. What saying regarding play captures a key storyline in your life right now: playing it up, playing it down, playing fair, playing for keeps, playing favorites, playing it safe, playing hardball, playing house, playing it by ear, playing second fiddle, playing right into their hands,

throwing away the playbook, played out, playing hard to get, playing possum, playing with fire?

16. If you could give your younger self advice about play, what would it be?

17. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it. Or maybe the question or call you need to hear is waiting in one of the quotes listed below. Consider looking there!

Family Faith Formation

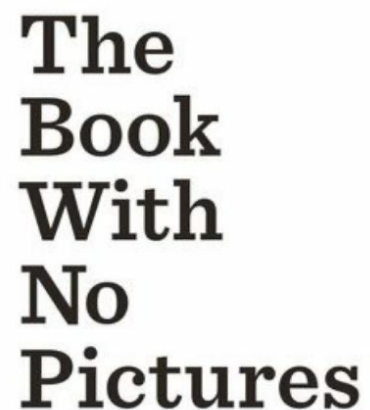
Books and Readings on Play

The Book With No Pictures by B.J. Novak

"This picture book with no pictures knows a thing or two about both books and kid-friendly comedy . . . Once children get the joke, they'll want to play it on as many of their grownups as possible."— The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books Amazon Review

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t23T6Vfan0>

BJ Novak reads part of his book (good to watch to see the kids' reactions!) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZwY5BeYcyo>



The
Book
With
No
Pictures

by B.J. Novak

Mindful Moment: Laughter Yoga

Jokes help us heal with laughter. Sometimes you don't even need a joke to laugh. Here's a special type of yoga to try.

Centering: Let's now get into our meditation positions.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you or close them.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Family Movie

Patch Adams

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0129290/>

The true story of a heroic man, Hunter "Patch" Adams, determined to become a medical doctor because he enjoys helping people. He ventured where no doctor had ventured before, using humour and pathos.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of belonging.

Word Roots & Definitions

“Across the globe, many of the etymological roots of the word ‘play’ locate it in the visceral: ludere in Latin refers to leaping fishes and fluttering birds. The Anglo-Saxon lâcan means to move like a ship on the waves, or to tremble like a flame. The Sanskrit kridati also, as in Germanic languages, describes the movement of wind. In play, we are rarely immobile. We’re alive.”

[Source](#)

This embodied sense of play extends to other sources of the word. The Proto-West Germanic *plegōjanan* meaning “occupy oneself about” and the Middle Dutch *pleyen* “to rejoice, be glad.”

[Source](#)

Wise Words from Indigenous Cultures

I want to listen deeply enough that I hear everything and nothing at the same time and am made more by the enduring quality of my silence. I want to question deeply enough that I am made more not by the answers so much as my desire to continue asking questions. I want to speak deeply enough that I am made more by the articulation of my truth shifting into the day’s shape. In this way, listening, pondering and sharing become my connection to the oneness of life, and there is no longer any part of me in exile.
Richard Wagamese (Embers)

I’ve been considering the phrase “all my relations” for some time now. It’s hugely important. It’s our saving grace in the end. It points to the truth that we are all related, that we are all connected, that we all belong to each other. The most important word is “all”. Not just those who look like me, sing like me, dance like me, speak like me, pray like me or behave like me. ALL my relations. That means every person, just as it means every rock, mineral, blade of grass, and creature. We live because everything does. If we were to choose collectively to live that teaching, the energy of our change of consciousness would heal each of us – and heal the planet.
Richard Wagamese (Embers)

Knowledge is not wisdom. But wisdom is knowledge in action. I have lived most of my years immersed in the culture of books. I command a lot of facts. I comprehend a lot of concepts. That does not make me wise or even intelligent. It just indicates what I have memorized. But when I activate those facts and concepts to find the greatest, grandest version of myself, and then use them to work toward that vision, I begin the process of wisdom. The most essential question to ask myself is not “What do I think about this?” but rather “How do I feel about this?” In such simplicity is greatness made possible for an individual, a society and a human family. – Richard Wagamese (Embers)

Singing the Living Tradition Reading No. 614 - The Sacred Hoop

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all,
And round beneath me was the whole hoop of the world.
And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell
And I understood more than I saw.
For I was seeing in the sacred manner the shape of all things of the spirit
And the shapes as they must live together like one being.
And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops
that make one circle, wide as daylight and starlight,
And in the center grew one mighty flowering tree
To shelter all the children of one mother and one father.
And I saw that it was holy. Black Elk

Singing the Living Tradition Reading No. 550 - We Belong to the Earth

This we know. The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth.
This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life; We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.
attributed to Chief Noah Sealth

Singing the Living Tradition Reading No. 551 - Earth Teach Me

Earth teach me stillness as the grasses are stilled with light.
Earth teach me suffering as old stones suffer with memory.
Earth teach me caring as parents who secure their young.
Earth teach me courage as the tree which stands all alone.
Earth teach me limitation as the ant which crawls on the ground.
Earth teach me freedom as the eagle which soars in the sky
Earth teach me resignation as the leaves which die in the fall.
Earth teach me regeneration as the seed which rises in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness as dry fields weep with rain.
from the Ute Indians of North America

Wise Words on Play

Let us arrive as children to this huge playground – the universe. *Roger Bourland*

In play we move below the level of the serious,
as the child does; but we can also move above it—
in the realm of the beautiful and the sacred. *Johan Huizinga*

If I get to pick what I want to do, then it's play... if someone else tells me that I have to do it, then it's work. *Patricia Nourot*

They are enlightened who join in this play knowing it as play, for people suffer only because they take as serious what the gods made for fun. *Alan Watts*

In rare moments of deep play, we can lay aside our sense of self, shed time's continuum, ignore pain, and sit quietly in the absolute present, watching the world's ordinary miracles. No mind or heart hobbles. No analyzing or explaining. No questing for logic. No promises. No goals. No relationships. No worry. One is completely open to whatever drama may unfold. *Diane Ackerman*

To play is to listen to the imperative inner force that wants to take form and be acted out without reason. It is the joyful, spontaneous expression of oneself. *Michelle Cassou and Stewart Cubley*

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.
Anonymous

We don't stop playing because we grow old, but rather we grow old because we stop playing. *Karl Groos*

To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it! *Charlie Chaplin*

It is interesting that Hindus, when they speak of the creation of the universe, do not call it the work of God, they call it the play of God, the Vishnu-lila, lila meaning "play." And they look upon the whole manifestation of all the universes as a play, as a sport, as a kind of dance. *Alan Watts*

I realized that the way of play was a part of all religions. St. Paul proclaimed himself a 'fool for Christ.' Jews honor the Sabbath, that time to stop working and to take pleasure in life. Hindus say that the universe was created as 'lila,' divine play. (After all, the Omnipresent Eternal One needed something to do.) Muslim Sufis teach through jokes about Mulla Nasruddin, a laughable sage/fool. Native Americans celebrate bawdy trickster-figures. (Try attending a Cherokee "Booger Event.") Buddhists practice meditative games of breathing, attention, and joyful presence. Zen teachers poke fun at dogma, as in master Feng's pronouncement: 'The Buddha is a bullheaded jail keeper, and the Patriarchs are horse-faced old maids!' It seemed the whole world was playing with Spirit in a thousand delightful ways. *Drew Leder*

The world of play favors exuberance, license, abandon. [In it,] selves can be revised. *Diane Ackerman*

Time is a game played beautifully by children. *Heraclitus*

Don't play the saxophone. Let it play you. *Charlie Parker*

The children sat in a circle around him & he said, I don't believe in life anymore & no one said anything for a while because he was older than they were & maybe knew something they didn't,

but then someone said, let's play a game & someone said, Spy & someone else said, Chase & soon there was no one there but the man sitting alone. *StoryPeople*

Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature. *Tom Robbins*

I count that day lost when I am not moved to laughter or tears, but even more if I have not played. *George Sheehan*

I tell you; we are here on Earth to fart around and don't let anybody tell you different. *Kurt Vonnegut*

Life is for sure the greatest game that you'll ever play. *Steven Redhead*

Embodiments of Play

Seesaws Across the Border

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/30/us/seesaws-border-wall-us-mexico-trnd/index.html>

Caine's Arcade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=falFNkdq96U>

Playfully Singing on the Way to Work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xctzp0dp9uc>

Putting down work to play in puddles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN-MjUC4f9k>

Playing with Stop-Motion Animation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lf0MkEowQ1w&t=3s>

Playing with Food and Other Stuff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9hWlxyLcYk>

Playing with Bubble Wrap and Beauty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeFzpshBwwk>

Playing with Origami

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ4hDppP_SQ

The Joy of Playing with Letters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjAl9NFeSRo>

George Carlin Playing with Words

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSS_PhR9WWo

Playing Fetch

<https://www.facebook.com/fernando.messias.9279/videos/215177476697669/>

Playing with Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW8mF2be0I0&list=RDyW8mF2be0I0&index=2>

Playing with Tubes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cG0jprCQ6Ak>

Playful Mouse Houses

<https://mymodernmet.com/anonymouse-miniature-art-mice-shops/?fbclid=IwAR2Jro0MS6Dysko9OQ2yLaOH6rH7gsoLlRwLix1Wk8d7c6hiKUPpXhWrtpw>

Playing with Squirrels

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=709319816547866>

Seriously Playing with Legos

<https://www.dwell.com/article/worlds-tallest-lego-tower-9c41ffe1>

<http://www.shareable.net/blog/lego-bombing-and-the-art-of-infrastructure>

Yarn Play

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/77154/10-impressive-yarnbombing-projects>

<https://www.topcrochetpatterns.com/blog/the-wonderful-world-of-yarn-bombing>

Music

We create two different playlists for each of our monthly themes: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. We organize these lists as a journey of sorts. So consider listening from beginning to end and using the lists as musical meditations. Follow the links below to connect with this month's "Play Songs."

Click [here](#) for the Spotify playlist on [Play](#).

Click [here](#) for all [Spotify playlists](#).

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist on [Play](#).

Click [here](#) for all the [YouTube playlists](#).

Videos & Podcasts

Stuart Brown on Play, Spirit, and Character, On Being

<https://onbeing.org/programs/stuart-brown-play-spirit-and-character/>

Play is More than Just Fun, Stuart Brown - TED Talk

https://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_brown_play_is_more_than_just_fun/transcript?language=en

Gaming Can Make a Better World, Jane McGonigal

https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world#t-234116

Jason Silva on Deep Play as “Deep Now,” Shots of Awe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWBtEZNdKiM>

The History of Sketch Comedy, Keegan-Michael Key

<https://www.audible.com/pd/The-History-of-Sketch-Comedy-Podcast/B08RSN2ZV1>

Review [HERE](#)

Alan Watts - Life Is A Playful Dance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29atSZKbmS4>

Fun Theory!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ihai50diA7o>

Articles

Why it's Good for Grown-ups to Go Play

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/why-its-good-for-grown-ups-to-go-play/2017/05/19/99810292-fd1f-11e6-8ebe-6e0dbe4f2bca_story.html?utm_term=.448479c933c2

The Opposite of Play, Hilde Van Dyck

<https://paperplanepilots.be/opposite-play>

Hint: The opposite of play is not work!

The Importance of Play, Mary Anne Radmacher

<https://www.utne.com/mind-and-body/the-importance-of-play-ze0z1505zcwii>

“Music, movement, faith: they all speak of intentions offered and received. They say, “play with abandon.” Doing so lets me lean in not only to the goodness of the world but to my inner world, my memories of strong women and how their playing feeds my soul. Play—with abandon. It’s a gift I hope I can pass on...”

Books

Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul

Stuart Brown & Christopher Vaughan

Deep Play

Diane Ackerman

Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World

Jane McGonigal

Movies & TV

[The Big Flower Fight](#)

[Big](#)

[Life is Beautiful](#)

[The Yes Men](#)

[Candid Camera](#)

Future Themes

Theme packets will be posted to our website, surreyunitarians.ca, on the Thursday prior to the theme starting. If you'd like to join a small group, please contact Rev. Samaya. Small groups typically meet:

- the third Monday evening of each month (except in November when the group will meet on the last Monday evening of the month); and
- the fourth Wednesday afternoon of each month.

Themes for the 2021-2022 year have been set! Look forward to the following themes following on the question of, what does it mean to be a people of:

September – renewal,

October – deep listening,

November – healing,

December – stillness,

January – imagination,

February – Beloved Community,

March – commitment,

April – becoming,

May - story, and

June - compassion



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