

Small Group Ministry
Session Plan
The Business of Goodbyes
By Rev. Carie Johnsen (2021)

Opening Words “The Breath of Life Is Not Mine Alone” by Kristen L Harper

I do not wish to breathe another breath if it is not shared with others. The breath of life is not mine alone.

I brought myself to be with you, hoping that by inhaling the compassion, the courage, the hope found here, I can exhale the fear, the selfishness, the separateness I keep so close to my skin.

I cannot live another moment, at least not one of joy, unless you and I find our oneness somewhere among each other, somewhere between the noise, somewhere within the silence of the next breath.

Check-in, sharing

Topic/Activity: Goodbyes Are Hard by [Lauren Robbins](#)

Goodbyes are hard. So hard, in fact, that many of us skip that step within our relationships. Whether saying goodbye as in “see you later,” or goodbye as a final step in creating closure in a relationship, we often deny ourselves the opportunity to practice this important human interaction.

For many people, goodbyes are uncomfortable; they provide the opportunity to both experience and express the value that the relationship or person has had in our life. This vulnerability—displaying the difficulty we may experience in separating from one another— is a common challenge in a world where many are told to “stay strong,” avoiding all chances that you might cry, express other emotions, or be perceived as “overly sensitive.”

That’s all bogus. The human condition is about experiencing emotions and connecting with others through relationship.

Saying goodbye is a cathartic exercise in interpersonal connection and validating the impact people and experiences have on our lives. It’s important to honor the footprint others leave on our heart. It’s equally important to recognize that not all relationships are meant to be life-long. Many are time-limited; they are established for a specific reason, and when life circumstances shift, as they inevitably do, the relationship no longer serves its previous function. It’s okay to let relationships ebb and flow, and let some float away; that doesn’t mean they didn’t matter. We’re continuously evolving. Accordingly, our needs change and so do the relationships that fulfill those needs.

So practice saying goodbye. Do what feels right to express the value that their friendship, their support, or their camaraderie has for you. Allow others to see the impact that their presence has on you. And when it's time to say goodbye, whether just for now or forever, know that in saying goodbye you're not devaluing the time spent with this person, but saying: "You matter, and you've been part of my story."

Goodbyes may be hard, but that doesn't mean we should pretend they don't exist; emotional discomfort often equals emotional growth, something we all need to continually pursue joy and life satisfaction.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your experience and comfort level with saying goodbye?
2. As we bring to close twelve years of living our Unitarian Universalist faith together, what would you most like to remember about our shared ministries?
3. Ministerial relationships are time limited. When ministers leave, they have a complete break from the church to make space for a new minister to arrive and build relationships. The outgoing minister returns only at the invitation of their successor. How does this impact the experience of this goodbye for you?

A Practice of Saying Goodbye

We will close our time together with each of us saying goodbye to our Minister and our Minister saying goodbye to the members.

Closing Word

*Is this ending to be an ending,
Or merely prelude to new, glorious beginnings?
I pose the question;
In your hearts lies the answer.*
~ Michael A, Shuler