

# Session Two

## Don't Worry, Be Happy

### ***The objectives of this session are:***

- to explore ideas about happiness
- to recognize how our expectations affect our happiness
- to discover the Hindu concept of santosha (contentment)

### ***Materials and supplies you will need:***

- the DVD (or videotape) of the movie, *Star Trek: Generations*
- DVD or videotape player and TV monitor
- several copies of the UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- flash paper (available in magic or novelty stores and the internet at sites like: <http://www.penguinmagic.com>)
- large black cauldron or cooking pot
- pencils
- posterboard
- old magazines to cut up for collage
- glue, glue sticks or other adhesive
- newsprint and markers (optional)

### ***Things to do ahead of time:***

- locate the DVD (or videotape) and rent it from the library or video store if necessary
- If you will not be watching the whole film, use the DVD menu to select scene #14 (The Captain of the Enterprise) or if using a videotape, cue it by finding the right scene approximately one hour and twenty-nine minutes into the program
- watch the movie in its entirety (even if you have seen it before)

### ***Session Outline***

**Entering Activity:** Happiness Collage. (10 min)

**Premiere:** Watching an excerpt of the movie, *Star Trek Generations*. (15 min)

**Rising Action:** Barriers to Happiness. (15 min)

**Plot Point:** Discovering Santosha. (10 min)

**Wrap Up:** Popcorn activity and Closing Words. (10 min)

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### ***Entering Activity***

As participants arrive, invite them to create a collage of images which represent happiness.

After everyone has arrived and had some time to contribute to the group project, invite each of the participants to share some of the images they contributed to the group collage and why those images strike them as symbols of happiness. Remind the group that anyone always has the right to pass during times of sharing.

### ***Premiere***

#### **Watching *Star Trek: Generations*.**

Introduce the video by telling the group you will be watching an excerpt from the movie *Star Trek: Generations*. Ask if anyone has already seen it. If anyone has, ask them if they would be willing to share the premise of the film with the group. If not, introduce the video yourself by saying something to the effect of the following:

*This is the story of two men who find themselves in The Nexus – a place where dreams come true. It has been described as a place of “pure joy” which is different for everyone who finds themselves in The Nexus.*

Begin the video and watch scene #14 (The Captain of the Enterprise) – approximately one hour and twenty-nine minutes into the movie. In this scene, Picard tries to convince Kirk to leave the Nexus with him and stop the destruction of the star and the planet Veridian 3. Kirk is determined to stay in the Nexus and enjoy the chance to live his life over differently. However, after taking a horse out for a ride and jumping a gorge which always frightened him (but doesn't this time), he realizes that nothing in the Nexus is real. Once he realizes its not real, he no longer wants to stay and be a part of it.

If you will not be watching the entire movie, stop the video after ten minutes has passed and the two starship captains ride off on the horses to be engulfed in the white light – presumably the edge of the Nexus as they exit.

Begin by exploring the idea of the Nexus with the participants. What might a place of pure happiness be for them? Remind them that there is no time in the Nexus, and so it is possible for them to relive a moment in their life – or travel into the future to experience life which has not yet happened. Does this change what they would want to experience in such a place?

Remind the participants that Captain Kirk was determined to stay in the Nexus and live over a part of his life that he feels went wrong. Ask the participants about how regret can keep a person from experiencing happiness. How does regret keep a person from experiencing life to the fullest? How does wanting what we do not have – or wishing for what might have been – keep us from being happy?

## ***Rising Action***

### **Barriers to Happiness.**

Explore with the participants the idea that regret is only one barrier to happiness. What might be some others? Worry? Fear? Anger?

Invite the participants to take some time and write down some words on flash paper – words which might keep a person from experiencing happiness. When everyone has finished writing, encourage them to take turns coming forward and lighting the paper on fire, then dropping it into the large pot or cauldron, announcing these words as they are destroyed. (Note: The flash paper should burn up and disappear in the air before it hits the cauldron, but using the pot can serve as a safety net in case something should go wrong.)

Then encourage the participants to consider what creates happiness – having everything you want or being content with what you have? Encourage some discussion on this idea.

## ***Plot Point***

### **Discovering Santosha.**

Inform the participants that the word *santosha* is a Sanskrit word meaning “contentment.” This ancient concept expresses the idea that contentment – rather than the obtaining of gratification – is the source of true happiness. Why might this be better than the idea of happiness- as-bliss which is prevalent in our culture?

According to Hindus, santosha (or contentment) is the natural state of our humanity which allows for our creativity and love to emerge. It helps us to know our place in the universe at every moment and is unity with the largest, most abiding, reality. Santosha is above all – a way of achieving inner peace.

Invite the participants to consider:

How can this concept be meaningful to us as Unitarian Universalists?

How can we learn to feel the concept of santosha and achieve contentment with our own lives rather than yearn for what we do not have?

How might seeking contentment bring happiness to our lives?

How can we learn to accept our life and be happy with what we have?

How does our faith guide us in searching for contentment rather than longing for things which we do not have?

## ***Wrap Up***

### **Popcorn.**

Invite the participants to gather in a circle to engage in an activity known as “Popcorn.” For this activity, a person pops up (either a hand or full body as they are able or choose to do) and says aloud a short statement (one sentence or less) about something which brings contentment to their life.

After the first “popper” has finished his or her statement, then everyone who agrees with this statement should also “pop” up (a hand or body as desired). One of the people already “popped” can then choose to share something of their own to which the rest of the group can then “pop.” If no one already “popped” has a comment to add, then someone else can feel free to “pop up” with a comment of their own. This “popping” can continue as long as time allows.

### **Closing Words.**

Invite a participant to light the chalice while you or other participants take turns saying these closing words:

Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

– Abraham Lincoln, Former President of the United States

The pursuit of happiness is a most ridiculous phrase; if you pursue happiness you'll never find it.

– C. P. Snow, 20<sup>th</sup> century English novelist and scientist

Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.

– Helen Keller, 20<sup>th</sup> century educator and advocate for the disabled

End the session with a unison reading of Reading #505 “Let Us Be At Peace” by Thich Nhat Hanh from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

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## ***Taking It One Step Further:***

If your group will be watching the entire movie rather than just an excerpt, here are some additional ideas to expand the experience:

### **More Discussion.**

Why might Soran have been willing to do anything – including murder a planet full of people – in order to return to the Nexus? Have you ever done something to hurt others in the pursuit of happiness? Have you ever been hurt by others who were seeking happiness for themselves? How did that turn out?

Why was Kirk willing to give up the happiness he found in the Nexus once he realized it wasn't real? How might this make a difference? Would you choose happiness – even if you knew it was just an illusion?

When Data is happy to find his cat Spot alive, yet realizes he was crying, he wonders if his emotion chip is failing, but is reassured that it is functioning just fine. Have you ever been puzzled by your behavior in relation to your feelings? How does the expression of emotions – particularly strong ones – evoke unpredictable behavior?

At the end of the film, Picard says: “Someone once told me that time was a predator that stalked us all our lives. I rather believe that time is a companion who goes with us on the journey and reminds us to cherish every moment, because it will never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we've lived.” What do you think about this statement?

## More Activities.

Santosha is also the second *niyama* (self-discipline) of yoga practitioners. Invite a yoga instructor to visit your group to lead you through some *asanas* (yoga poses) and meditative breathing to help you further explore the concept of santosha.

Create another mural – this time using the concept of contentment/santosha – with ideas and images of things which bring inner peace.

Listen to some music with the theme of finding happiness. Consider: What are these songs communicating about happiness? Are they promoting the idea of contentment = happiness or are they emphasizing the seeking of bliss? Here are some ideas for songs on the theme of happiness:

“Don’t Worry, Be Happy” (Bobby McFerrin)  
“Happiness Runs” (Donovan)  
“Let the Happiness In” (Sylvian David)  
“Love and Happiness” (John Mellencamp)  
“I’ve Been Lonely for So Long” (Mick Jagger)  
“This Way to Happiness” (Frey Glenn)  
“Dancing on the Jetty” (INXS)  
“Happiness Is” (Verve Pipe)  
“Bliss” (Muse)  
“Happiness” (Vanessa Williams)  
“Rivers of Joy (No Angels)  
“Hello Happiness Goodbye Loneliness” (Buck Owens)