

# 10 Tips for Welcoming and Including Young Adults

**1 Treat young adults as people.** Young adults are unique individuals. People with skills and gifts and passions. People who come to UU congregations looking for spiritual nourishment, community, and social action. People who are not defined by their age alone.

**2 Talk with young adults.** In coffee hour. Before worship. After worship. At events. Whether they are new or seasoned in the congregation, get to know young adults as you would anyone else. Learn about their passions, their spirituality, their lives, their dreams. Take a look at the UUA poster “Coffee Hour Caution” on the next page for good tips on talking with young adults.

**3 Create welcoming space for single, partnered, student, working, unemployed, and parenting young adults.** Young adulthood encompasses many stages and paths that are not necessarily linear. Don't group all young adults together, or assume all young adults have the same life goals. For young adult parents, childcare during church events can facilitate participation.

**4 Respect young adults' diverse identities.** Many young adults are accustomed to and/or hope for communities where their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, appearance, etc. are accepted and celebrated. Pointed questions and/or using young adults (or anyone!) as a sounding board to explore your own questions or issues about a particular identity is unhelpful at best, and alienating and extremely harmful at worst.

**5 Encourage young adults find their niche in your congregation.** Not just to have young adult representation on a committee. Not as warm bodies. But because they have unique skills and gifts, and may have precious little time to share them.

**6 Include diverse voices in worship.** Young adult voices. And also voices of people of colour, people of diverse sexual and gender identities. People of diverse theological and spiritual and other perspectives. Diversity strengthens our communities and young adults are often particularly attuned to this.

**7 Create opportunities for young adults to connect with one another AND for multigenerational connection.** Both huddling (same age) and mixing (multigenerational) activities are important for young adults, though some young adults are looking for more of one than the other. Listen to the hopes and needs of young adults present in your community to discern a good balance.

**8 Respect young adults as part of your congregation now, NOT as future saviours of your congregation and/or UUism.** Comments like: “We need more young people like you!” and “Your generation will change/save church” both minimize the current contributions of young adults and place a heavy burden on them.

**9 Connecting with ministers is important for many young adults.** Young Adult events hosted or attended by the congregation's minister are often particularly successful. Young adults may need special invitation or welcome to seek out pastoral and/or spiritual support from their minister. If your congregation doesn't have a minister, young adults may appreciate outreach from wise, thoughtful, and caring lay leaders.

**10 Attend to your welcoming practices for people of all ages.** Do you have welcoming and inclusive ways to connect with the curious individual, welcomed visitor, connected friend, engaged participant, and integrated leader? Your welcome of people of all ages, including young adults, will benefit if you do!