

# Facilitator Notes for “Are We Grownups Yet?”

## Before the Gathering

This session uses a divided-group responsive reading for the Chalice Lighting. Read it over to get comfortable with it. Be prepared to divide the group into two parts, explain the meaning of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and YOLO (You Only Live Once), and get the two sections started.

## Words of the Day

I felt like a REAL grownup when I ...

**Chalice Lighting** *(Divide into two groups. Read FOMO and then YOLO, one paragraph at a time.)*

### FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

- We see the public lives of our friends and neighbors, and wonder if we are living up to our potential.
- Life feels like it’s moving too fast; we cannot do all that we want or need to do. We long for us all to slow down.
- Are we missing out by living the life that feels true to us?
- In this moment, we let go of expectations, of fears, of worries – and we accept that life is exactly what it ought to be.

### YOLO (You Only Live Once)

- We feel the inner doubts and questions, and try to live life fully – creating the life we want by our words and deeds.
- Life *is* moving too fast; we have but one short life to do all that can be done. We long for us all to speed up.
- Are we missing out by doing so much that we cannot simply just be?
- In this moment, we let go of the past and future, living into the moment, accepting that life is exactly as we make it.

**Read in Unison.** Our different lives represent different threads; each a color and texture of its own. May our lives be woven together, becoming stronger by our connections and brighter by our diversity. *(Light the Chalice)*

## The Basket

### Sharing of Joys and Concerns

### Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support

### Shared Readings

When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up. *C.S. Lewis*

People say you're born innocent, but it's not true. You inherit all kinds of things that you can do nothing about. You inherit your identity, your history, like a birthmark that you can't wash off ... You have to earn your own innocence ... You have to grow up and become innocent.  
*Hugo Hamilton, The Sailor in the Wardrobe*

The value of marriage is not that adults produce children, but that children produce adults.  
*Peter De Vries*

For, after all, you do grow up, you do outgrow your ideals, which turn to dust and ashes, which are shattered into fragments; and if you have no other life, you just have to build one up out of these fragments. *Fyodor Dostoyevsky*

Until recently each generation found it more expedient to plead guilty to the charge of being young and ignorant, easier to take the punishment meted out by the older generation (which had itself confessed to the same crime short years before). The command to grow up at once was more bearable than the faceless horror of wavering purpose, which was youth. *Maya Angelou*

It is all too common for caterpillars to become butterflies and then to maintain that in their youth they had been little butterflies. Maturation makes liars of us all. *George E. Vaillant*

Maturity is a bitter disappointment for which no remedy exists, unless laughter could be said to remedy anything. *Kurt Vonnegut*

We're happy, free, confused, and lonely at the same time  
It's miserable and magical, oh yeah  
Tonight's the night when we forget about the deadlines / It's time,  
I don't know about you, but I'm feeling 22 *Taylor Swift, "22"*

When we are children we seldom think of the future. This innocence leaves us free to enjoy ourselves as few adults can. The day we fret about the future is the day we leave our childhood behind. *Patrick Rothfuss*

Youth ends when egotism does; maturity begins when one lives for others. *Hermann Hesse*

## **Deep Sharing/Deep Listening**

**Round 1:** Share your reflections on being grownups and the preparation materials.

**Round 2:** Share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

## **Closing Circle**

## **Extinguishing the Chalice**

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again. (*Extinguish the chalice*)

## **Song/Chime**

## **Announcements**

### **The Covenant**

I commit myself:

- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the "I-message."

## Preparation for “Are We Grownups Yet?”

The question “Are we grownups yet?” assumes that there are defining characteristics of adulthood. Many lists are available that purport to show just that, giving lists of 5 or 10 or 50 signs that you are indeed a grownup. Such lists usually fall into categories, such as:

- Developmental tasks (working a job, marrying, having children)
- Behavioral tasks (cleaning up after self, gardening, saving \$\$ for retirement)
- Owning things (bank accounts, life insurance, matching dishes)

Generally, governments regulate certain activities by age based on biological markers: driving, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, voting, seeing movies with adult ratings, working outside a family business, or being charged for crimes as an adult. These biological markers continue to change over time, so puberty and brain development of past generations do not match what the next generations may experience.

Many religions and cultures also use these biological markers for “coming of age” ceremonies. Through the sacrament of confirmation, Catholics are encouraged to recognize their responsibility for their neighbor, a sign of adulthood. In Jewish tradition, a boy of 13 or girl of 12 becomes responsible for observing the commandments, and the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony publicly marks the assumption of that obligation. UU congregations mark the transitions of youth in “coming of age” or “bridging” ceremonies, including reflections from the youth and their educators on their beliefs, in a demonstration of UU’s fourth principle: the free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

In an *Atlantic* article on definitions of adulthood, Julie Beck cites research psychologist Jensen Arnett, who claims that young people still want career, marriage and parenting, “they just don’t see them as the defining traits of adulthood.” Arnett says that adulthood is tied up with social roles: “A big part of being an adult is people treating you like one, and taking on these roles can help you convince others – and yourself – that you’re responsible.” Beck asked readers for opinions and found that no one event marks adulthood. One reader reports, “I’m an OB/GYN and watch women struggle through many life changes ... I think the answer to ‘When do you become an adult?’ has to do with when you finally have acceptance of yourself ... My patients who seem secure through any of life[’s] struggles, those are the women who seem like adults.”

We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up of layers, cells, constellations. *Anais Nin*

To abandon the child ‘within’ means that the adult ‘without’ will be an adult in name only. And frankly, I can only name a handful of things that are that tragic. *Craig D. Lounsbrough*

Critics who treat ‘adult’ as a term of approval, instead of as a merely descriptive term, cannot be adult themselves. To be concerned about being grown up, to admire the grown up because it is grown up, to blush at the suspicion of being childish; these things are the marks of childhood and adolescence. And in childhood and adolescence they are, in moderation, healthy symptoms. Young things ought to want to grow. But to carry on into middle life or even into early manhood this concern about being adult is a mark of really arrested development. *C.S. Lewis*

Maturity, one discovers, has everything to do with the acceptance of ‘not knowing.’  
*Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves*

I am convinced that most people do not grow up ... We marry and dare to have children and call that growing up. I think what we do is mostly grow old. We carry accumulation of years in our bodies, and on our faces, but generally our real selves, the children inside, are innocent and shy as magnolias.  
*Maya Angelou, Letter to My Daughter*

Would the boy I was approve of the man I am? No, the boy I was would have thrown himself off the nearest bridge just to save himself from future embarrassment. The adolescent I was would have driven the car to get him to the bridge, and the man I was the year following my father’s death would have plied the boy with strong spirits so the fall wouldn’t hurt so bad. But I am not the child I was, the teen I was, nor the man I was then.

I am the man I am now. It is all I can ever be. It’s all any of us can be.  
*Raziq Brown, Becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood*

You don’t stop laughing when you grow old, you grow old when you stop laughing.  
*George Bernard Shaw*

## Questions to Ponder

1. Describe a “defining moment” when you felt you may have achieved adulthood. Knowing what you know now, how might your description change?
2. How do you judge whether someone is an adult? Reflect on whether you are using “adulthood” as a term of approval, a descriptive term, or whether the term carries some other meaning.
3. What coming of age ceremonies have you played a part in? Reflect on their meaning culturally or spiritually.
4. What differences have you noticed in your own learning through being with diverse age groups as opposed to programs geared toward specific age groups?
5. Think of an experience that has helped to “bridge the gap” in communication as our families have been separated by generations and distance throughout our lifetimes.
6. What activities do you indulge in that help recall the freedom and innocence of childhood?
7. Without referring to your biological age, how old do you feel?

## Words of the Day

Before coming to the gathering, think of a time when you felt like you had achieved adulthood. The prompt for the Words of the Day activity will be to complete this sentence:  
“I felt like a REAL grownup when I ...”