



coexist

the story of faiths

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the inspiration

a note from the designer

the beginning

As a child I can remember sitting in the car with my dad and asking him a million questions about why the world was the way it was. As a born and raised Catholic he would always insert aspects of his religion as part of the answers to the questions I asked. Luckily, my dad always urged me to think for myself and question these teachings in order to uncover my own beliefs.

the realization

Fast-forward 13 years later and I enter college as what I would call “an undercover Christian;” which is a weird way of saying I believed in Christianity but didn’t want others to hear much about it.

In this new environment where new thoughts and ideas were being poured out every day I became obsessed with understanding the beliefs of others. It started with asking friends about their own faiths, google-ing and researching alternate religions to my own, and ultimately in a rabbit hole of documentaries and articles about cults taking these teachings to the extreme.

With this newfound perspective of alternative belief systems I came to a point in my life where I realized that I didn’t, nor did anyone else, have the true reasoning to how life works. I decided for myself that instead of following along a faith that didn’t fit all my ideals and values, I would disaffiliate myself from Christianity and define my belief system in my own way.

At the same time it became clear to me that while the university allowed for open discussion and clarity, the world around me did not have the same open-mindedness. I started to realize that discrimination, specifically religious discrimination, was happening because others were not educated on what someone else’s beliefs actually were. A lack of knowledge about other’s actual beliefs and ideals is what I came to see as the root to our problem of religious intolerance.

the project

From these two merging realizations of my own religious disaffiliation and the climate of discrimination in the US came the inspiration for what is now “Coexist: The Story of Faiths.” It was through my research, countless conversations with people about the future of religion and equality in America, and my own passion about the subject that allowed for the project to be pulled together.

While this product is just a small action directed toward the current issue and rising trend in our society, I hope that it can inspire others to continue the fight toward a world that embraces diversity. It is only through education and understanding that we can create a more tolerant and accepting world, one in which we can all coexist.





“

*You are educated when you learn to **coexist** with others and as a result you enhance the whole existence.*

”

Debasish Mridha

no the problem

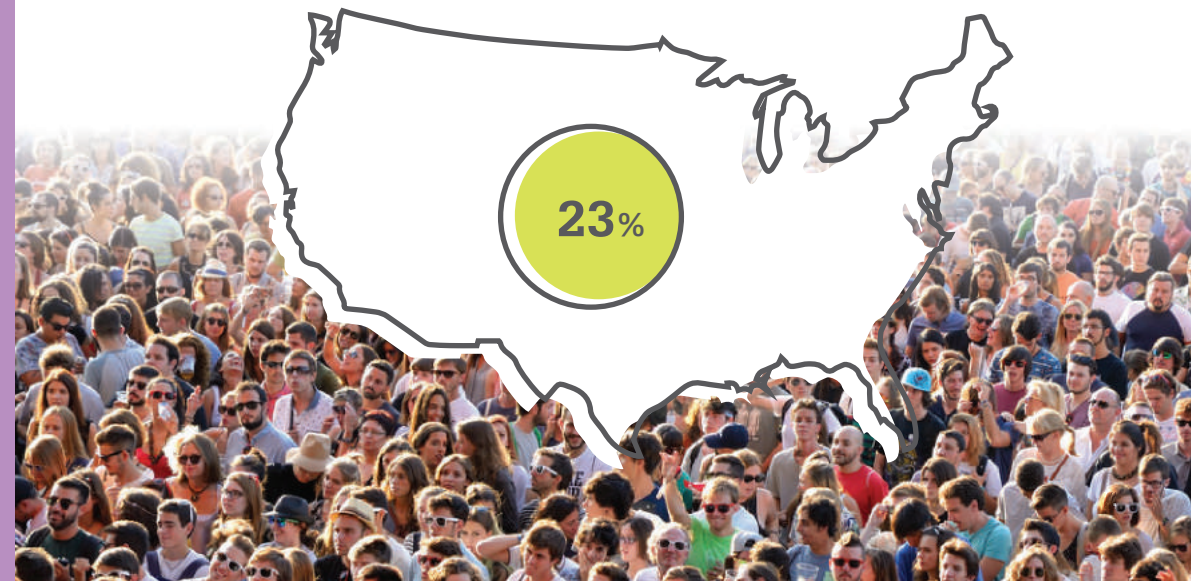
disaffiliate

The process of leaving a religious organization or disavowing one's former religious identity.

a growing trend

In the last decade Americans have undergone a drastic change in their beliefs and ideals. Many people have taken on modern views concerning sex, race, and gender that have affected their opinions and values.

This shift away from more traditional views on these subjects has manifested itself through a simultaneous shift in religious behaviors. A recent study done in 2014 showed that 23% of Americans reported themselves as disaffiliated from their religion – for various reasons – and this number is on the rise.



*early studies**

In the early research phase 72 participants were surveyed to see why they left their religion. From these surveys a common pattern was identified in which parents choosing a certain religion for their child, pushed the child away from that faith altogether.

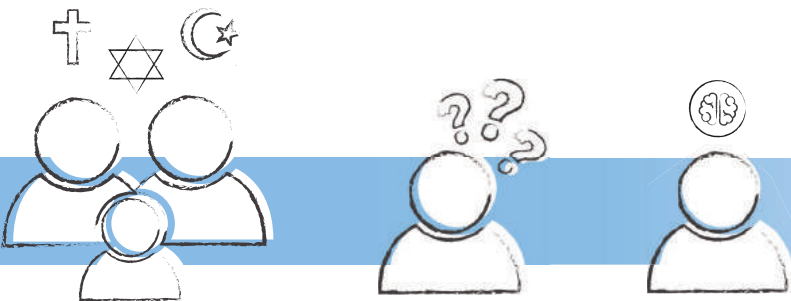
the old generation

The older generation has shown a common pattern that when raising their children they have chosen a religion for them that they had to follow. Then when trying to figure out what they wanted to do in their own lives many turned to disaffiliate because they felt that the religion wasn't theirs to begin with.



a new generation

Now with a new generation of parents who are disaffiliated or more religiously open, there is a chance to raise our children differently and educate them on multiple religions.



a proposed solution

To break this cycle of forcing children into a belief system, education lends as a solution to exposing children to religious options while also making them aware of what others believe. Before we explore this solution further we have to examine the problems that people have with religious education.

the contrarian

With every solution there comes an opposite view. One in particular to this is why would I teach my child something I don't believe in the first place.

Quote from participant:

Kyle Kearney, Age 21

"Growing up I felt like my parents forced me to believe something that I didn't agree with. I don't want to force my kids into believing any of that stuff when there is so many things that prove religion wrong."



Lisa McElroy

"Why I Regret What I Taught my Children About Religion"

the rebuttal

Teaching children about faiths is not only a way to allow them to discover for themselves what they would like to believe but aiding in the following areas as well:



evangelist targets

A child can become an easy target for evangelists of other faiths if a child lacks the tools to understand and evaluate the beliefs they are hearing.



fear & ignorance

If a child does not understand a religion this may cause fear. Fear then has the opportunity to evolve into ignorance if they do not become educated on what those people actually believe.



a piece of culture

Whether you are pious or not, religion is a large portion of many people's culture. We can not truly understand one another's culture if we don't understand their religion.

"I am sure that I have a parental responsibility to teach about why [it] is central to others' lives. I am sure that they can benefit from a having a historical perspective about religious intolerance and from fostering religious inclusion - and that they can only do that in a considered way if they actually know something about religion."

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the solution

how we teach

When teaching religion, experts vary in opinions on how this should be done. These major differences lie in the physical space in which we teach children and how we present the information in order to eliminate bias. One thing we can all agree on is that children gain positive attributes to their perspective by doing so.

positive outcomes



critical thinking



respect



acceptance

teaching aspects

This project pulls from the opinions of many religious educators books and presentations. Specifically Dan Dennett and Wendy Thomas Russell have outlined specific structures that have both contributed to the design of the digital book.

dan dennett

*American philosopher / cognitive scientist
Ted Talk - 2006*

one policy proposal

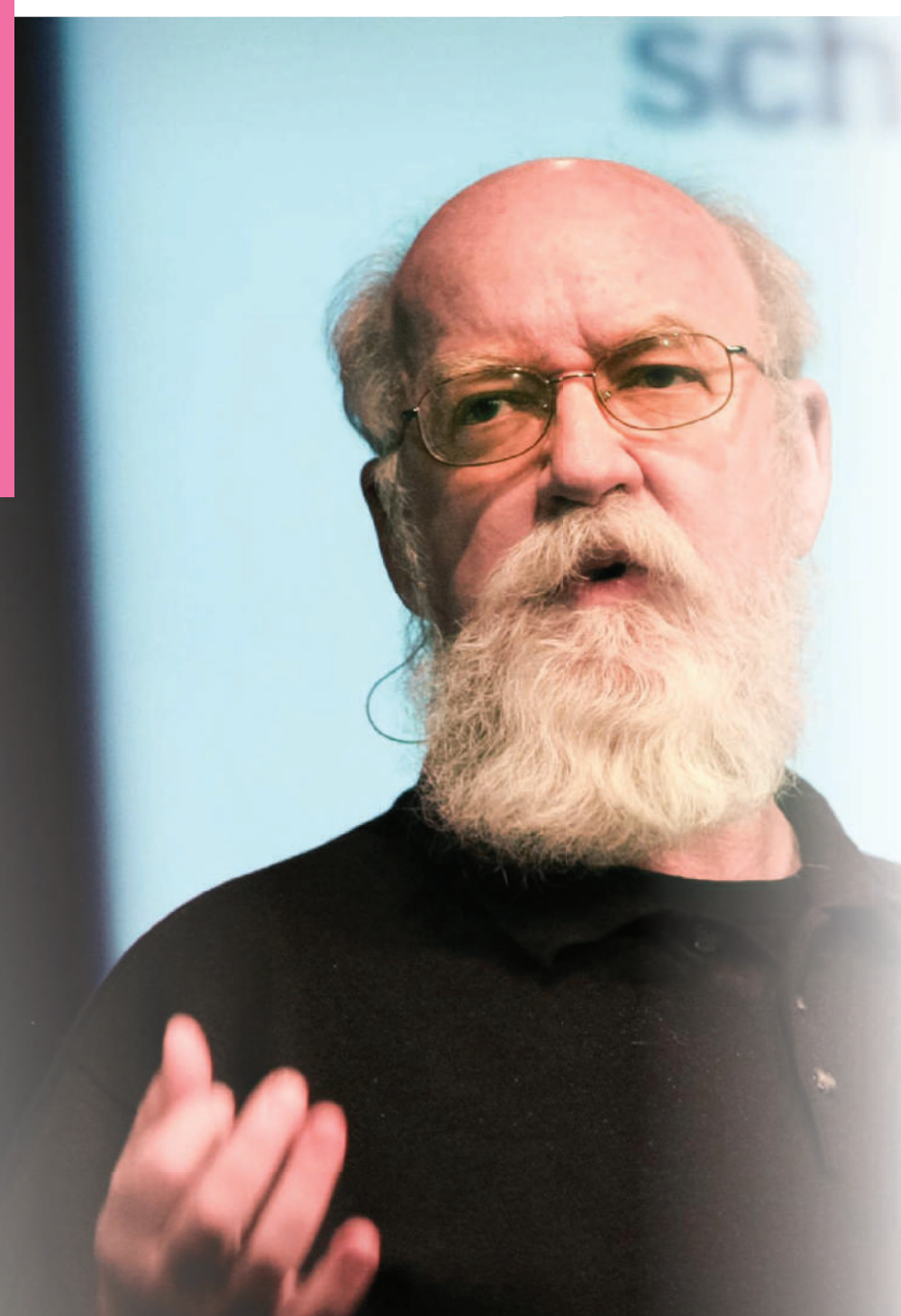
Dan proposes that all children around the world should be educated on religion in the school system just as writing and arithmetic are taught.

key components

- Teach religions on a factual bases, leaving out values.
- Educate child on multiple religions so they get a holistic perspective.
- “Democracy depends on informed citizens”
Without religious education our children can not be knowledgeable about their society.

disclaimer

Coexist was not created to be used as an educational tool within the school system. The proposed design focuses on the key components of Dan Dennett’s policy and not on its suggested location of teaching.



wendy thomas russell

Author: Relax, It's Just God: How and Why to Talk to Your Kids About Religion When You're Not Religious

a proposed teaching structure

Wendy Thomas Russell proposed a three-tiered system of teaching religion to children.

emphasize

Fairness - Critical thinking - Respect

teach

Multiple Religions - Side-by-side

focus

Where - Rejections/Embraces -
Ceremonies - Religious Inconsistencies



"There is an indoctrination in telling children to believe one certain belief. If You teach your child to only believe one way and that other ways are wrong – then this leads to causes children to be bigotry against those who don't believe what they do – no matter if you are religious or atheist or agnostic."

the people

When looking at the solution is it important to consider the people in which this would affect. This system does not only affect one person but an interaction between two different personas.

persona 1

Jill Stites - First-Time Mom

Jill is a first-time mom who disaffiliated with her religion during college. Both Jill and her husband identify as Atheist but have yet to talk to her son about their beliefs. Jill's son is getting older and there is pressure from her parent to teach him about the religion they had raise her in. While Jill doesn't want to disrespect her parents she is wary of forcing her child to learn a certain religion that she felt confined in as a child.



persona 2

Noah Stites - Curious Child



1st grade (5-6 years old)

Noah is in his early learning where he has not been exposed to tons of information.



Diverse School

Goes to a diverse school with friends that have varying religious backgrounds.



High Energy

Young boy that is easily distracted and enjoys play.

Jill's goals

- Raise a kind and tolerant child capable of making up his own mind
- Educate her son on his grandparents religious views
- Create an open atmosphere conducive for religious dialogue

2.2. the product

what it does

Coexist: The Story of Faiths, is an interactive, digital book that takes children on a journey through the top five most practiced religions in the world. This hands on experience offers an exciting way for parents and their child to learn more about other belief systems while practicing tolerance and objectivity.

educate

Aims to educate the parent and child with a ten category model that is applied to all five religions. The consistent categories allow for easy comparison and a holistic view of all the faiths.



interact

To allow for engaged each topic includes some level of integration and play. This creates a sense of enjoyment while making the learning more hands.



discuss

By partnering with a parent or guardian, a child has the ability to ask questions or talk about the content they are learning which allow for better understanding for the child and an easier talking point for the parent.



the brand

Throughout Coexist's identity geometry and color are the two main aspects that lend to the playfulness and childlike feel of the brand as a whole.

visual mark

The visual mark symbolizes an image of the earth that also resembles a depiction of the sky. This representation of the world and a "heaven" like symbol embodies the idea of people and faiths coming together as one.



animation



typography

serifa regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789

serifa light

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789

primary palette

The primary palette pulls one color from each of its secondary color groups. It also includes a lighter blue that is the over arching color for the brand itself.



secondary palette

A secondary palette is established to highlight the individuality within each religion. These colors were chosen from religious traditions, symbolic meaning and festival decor.



islam

green tradition - vegetation - life



hinduism

vital red - sacred saffron



christianity

sanctuary - penitence - royalty



judaism

true blue - sky - spirituality



buddhism

rainbow of nirvana - pure light

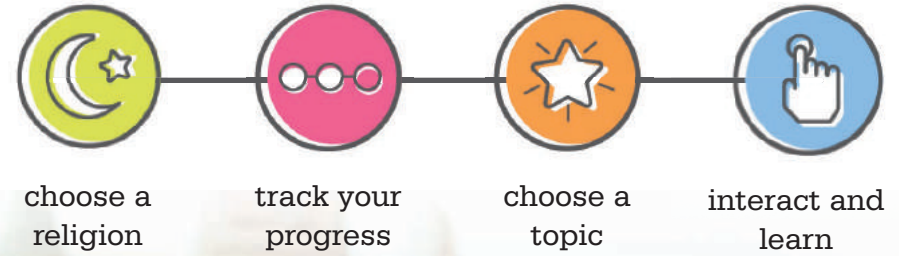


2.8

the experience

user journey

During the journey of moving through Coexist, the guardian and child will hit these major interaction points which will highlight the main features being equality, choice and interaction.



equality

With each individual religion, Coexist has created a model that allows for each religion to be taught under comparable categories. At the same time the layout and design of each religion is kept consistent with accents of color and specific imagery so that faiths are viewed as equally as exciting.

category system

Within each religion there is a basic 10-category system that ranges from the origin of the faith to its similarities and differences from other religions. By doing this children and parents can learn basics that can then be compared easily through out the learning experience.



home screens

Each home screen uses the same structure so that navigation is kept consistent but also allows for fairness amongst the faiths. While the structures may be the same, these screens allow for children to see the individuality in each religion through their coloring and visual graphics.

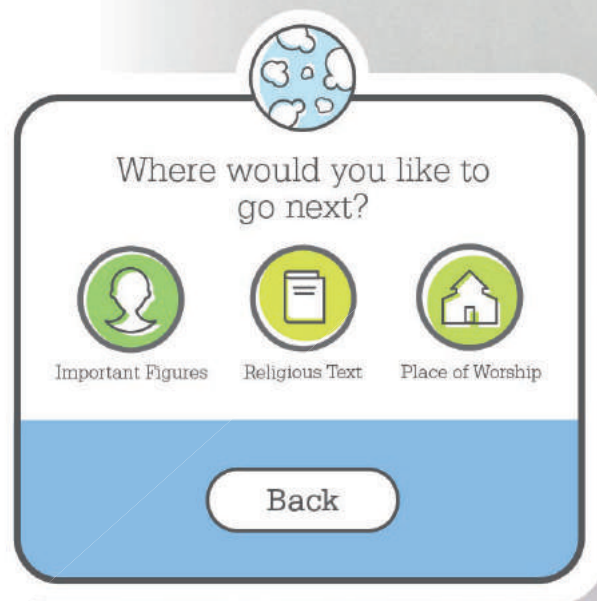


bias in children

Studies have shown that discontinuity amongst teaching structures can have the ability to sway their interest on one topic over another. Utilizing a constant structure allows for a level of bias to be removed.

choice

While Coexist's main goal is to educate, the book aims to allow the child to feel that they have an element of control. To apply this, the book periodically gives a child the ability to pick the next topic that he/she would like to learn about.



108 outcomes

During each individual religion there are 108 different paths that a given child can go through creating a truly unique journey.

interact

In order for a child to retain more of the information and enjoy the learning process, the book includes game like activities that provokes engagement. These interactions include the physical process of choosing topics but also specific games structured in each category.



interaction of choice

By pairing the ability to choose an activity and the physical action of doing so the book becomes even more of a game instead of a straight forward book.



Can you pick out the central dome and the towers of this mosque?

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the appendix

photo resources

- pg. 6** <https://unsplash.com/photos/1NcLhG3DksY>
- pg. 9** <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2014/11/news-police-like-estimate-crowd-size-parade-protest-like/>
- pg. 11** <https://unsplash.com/photos/3CTufp-cpzo>
- pg. 13** <https://howtoadult.com/books-kids-prosocial-behavior-16024.html>
- pg. 15** <http://digital.vpr.net/post/new-report-shows-small-schools-are-financial-drain-education-system>
- pg. 17** https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_s_response_to_rick_warren
- pg. 19** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Axs9hZj-yzE>
- pg. 20** <https://www.infobae.com/tag/autismo/>
- pg. 21** <https://unsplash.com/photos/3O5GPcS3juY>
- pg. 23** <https://www.kidscreations.com/blog/stay-track-keep-screen-time-limits-school/>
- pg. 27** https://unsplash.com/photos/_HzlOHmboSk
- pg. 29** <https://unsplash.com/photos/UH-xs-FizTk>
- pg. 33** <https://unsplash.com/photos/tQPgM1k6EbO>

research resources

- Brown. "The Secular Parent's Guide to Talking to Kids About Faith"
- Cline. "What Should Atheist Parents Do for Their Children"
- Cline. "What Should I tell My Kids About Religion? Atheism and Children"
- McElroy. "Why I Regret What I Taught my Children About Religion"
- Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly. "Teaching Children about Religion"
- Thomas Russell "10 Commandments for talking to your kids about religion"
- Wertheimer. "Why Kids Must Learn About Religion Much Earlier"

ted talks

- https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_s_response_to_rick_warren
- https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question
- https://www.ted.com/talks/sharon_brous_it_s_time_to_reclaim_and_reinvent_religion



To mom and dad,

Thank you for raising us in a household that praised
critical thinking and individual beliefs.