

Title: The Weave of Interdependence: From 6 Degrees Kevin Bacon to Our Shared Existence

By. Valeri Hovland

Good morning, friends. Today, we gather in the spirit of exploration and connection, delving into the intricate tapestry that binds us all. In the heart of our reflection is a concept both light-hearted and profound, a game that mirrors the vast, intricate web of life itself: the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon.

The "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" is a playful concept that's based on the idea of "six degrees of separation," which suggests that any two people on Earth are six or fewer acquaintance links apart. In the Kevin Bacon version, the goal is to find the shortest path of co-star connections between any given actor and Kevin Bacon himself. The lower the number of connections (or "degrees"), the closer an actor is to Kevin Bacon in the Hollywood universe and each separation degree receives a "Bacon Number".

Here are a few examples:

Bela Lugosi, has a Bacon number of 3:

1. Bela Lugosi was in Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948) with Vincent Price
2. Vincent Price was in The Raven (1963) with Jack Nicholson
3. Jack Nicholson was in A Few Good Men (1992) with Kevin Bacon

(<https://roghiemstra.com/bacon.html#:~:text=By%20looking%20at%20movies%20that,And%20so%20on.>)

And it's not just actors, you can play it with literally anybody who's ever appeared in a film.

Andy Warhol. He made an uncredited cameo in Tootsie, starring Dustin Hoffman, who was in Sleepers with Kevin Bacon — giving Warhol a Bacon Number of 2.

David Letterman? He was in Man on the Moon, as was David Koechner who acted alongside Bacon in My One And Only.

Or how about a man who was literally on the moon? Buzz Aldrin appeared in Transformers: Dark of the Moon, as did John Malkovich, who was in Queens Logic with Kevin Bacon. That's a Bacon Number of 2 for Aldrin too.

(<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SixDegreesOfKevinBacon>)

So let's consider the idea of interdependence, a foundational principle in Unitarian Universalism. Interdependence invites us to recognize our inherent connections to one another and the world around us. It asks us to see beyond the illusion of separateness, to understand that every action we take ripples through the web of existence, affecting life far beyond our immediate sight.

In the tapestry of existence, every thread is crucial, every color and texture interwoven in complex and beautiful ways. This metaphor illustrates the principle of interdependence—each of us is a thread in the vast fabric of life, connected in ways seen and unseen. This interconnectedness is not just a spiritual or philosophical idea; it is a reality that modern science, especially ecology and physics, affirms.

The UU seventh principle speaks of "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Today, I want to explore what it means to live fully awake to this principle, recognizing our place in this web and acknowledging the responsibility it bestows upon us.

Imagine, if you will, the entire universe as a vast, interwoven tapestry. Each thread represents an individual life, an entity, or even a moment in time. The game of Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon shows us how closely these threads are woven together within the realm of Hollywood. Yet, when we broaden our view, we see a tapestry of much greater complexity and beauty, encompassing all existence.

Environmental interdependence is evident in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food that sustains us. These elements do not exist in isolation; they are the products of intricate ecosystems, themselves interdependent. The health of a stream, for example, affects the health of the entire watershed, which in turn influences the health of communities far downstream. Nature operates through a balance of giving and receiving, a balance that we, too, are called to

honor in our lives. When we take more than we need or give less than we can, we disrupt the harmony that sustains life. Recognizing our interdependence with the natural world compels us to act with greater care and responsibility, striving to leave the Earth better than we found it for future generations. This mutualism is a dance of survival, each participant essential to the life cycle of the other and, by extension, to the health of the whole ecosystem.

In human society, our interdependence is equally palpable. The clothes we wear, the technology we use, the food on our tables—all are the results of countless hands and minds, spanning the globe. We are connected through our economies, our cultures, and our shared humanity.

The principle of interdependence also calls us to recognize our impact on the world. Just as we are affected by the actions of others, our actions ripple through the tapestry of existence, affecting others in ways we may never fully comprehend. This understanding invites us into a stance of responsibility and compassion. It asks us to consider the welfare of the whole, to act with awareness of the broader consequences of our choices. This challenges the myth of the self-made individual, reminding us that our successes and struggles are shared, not solitary. Our actions, no matter how small, ripple through this web, affecting the whole.

Acknowledging our interdependence has implications for justice and equity. Injustice anywhere in the web harms the whole, diminishing us all. The struggles against racism, sexism, economic inequality, and environmental degradation are interconnected battles in the fight to uphold the dignity and worth of every being in our shared tapestry. Our faith calls us not only to recognize these injustices but to actively engage in dismantling them. We are urged to use our voices, our votes, and our resources in service of a more equitable and compassionate world. In doing so, we weave stronger, more resilient bonds in our world.

Yet, interdependence is not merely a call to responsibility; it is also a source of strength and hope. In recognizing our connections to one another and to the Earth, we find powerful allies in the struggles for justice, peace, and environmental sustainability. We discover that we are not alone, that our dreams for a better world are shared by many, and that together, we have the power to effect profound change.

As we reflect on the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon and the intricate web of interdependence it symbolizes, let us also consider the roles we play within this vast tapestry. How do we live out this principle of interdependence in our daily lives? How do we cultivate awareness of the impact our choices make on others and the planet? We do so by making more sustainable choices, engaging in community service, or simply listening more deeply to those around us. We practice gratitude for the countless connections that support our lives. When you express thanks, whether silently or aloud, it nurtures a spirit of generosity and reciprocity. Lastly, by embracing our vulnerability, admitting our need for others, and offering help and compassion in return it strengthens the bonds of community and deepens our understanding of interdependence.

As we go forth today, let us remember that we are not isolated beings but part of a vast, intricate web of existence. In the words of poet John Donne, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." May we weave a tapestry of life that reflects our highest values and aspirations, not just for ourselves, but for all beings with whom we share this beautiful, intricate planet.

Thank you.