

Resource Sheet: The Our Whole Lives program as an expression of Unitarian Universalist religion and ministry

This list was created by participants of the Grade 7-9/10-12 OWL Training in July 2017, held in Toronto, Ontario. We hope that it is helpful to you in promoting and running your congregational OWL program.

What is religious about sexuality education?

- It relates to our UU principles, including:
 - treating everyone equally and with kindness
 - recognizing the dignity and worth of every person, body, relationship and form of personal expression
 - working for social justice in the world
 - creating welcoming and inclusive communities
 - using reason and facts as we seek the truth
- Religion is about community
 - OWL offers a chance to explore important topics with others, not just individually
 - OWL relates to the values we hold as a community
- Religion is about understanding ourselves and our place in the world, making meaning of our lives. OWL is about understanding ourselves as sexual beings, and in relation to our society and the world.
- Sex, sexuality and relationships have always been controlled by religious institutions - UUism does not seek to control, but to write a new story about healthy sexuality.
- Religions create a set of ideas, morals and values, and OWL expresses truly Unitarian Universalist values about sexuality.
- Religion is an expression of beliefs, values and an exploration of meaning.
- Religion is about binding together in spiritual practice and discovery.
- Sexuality is about binding together with other people and to ourselves.
- Unitarian Universalism asks us to centre love, justice and community in our lives.
 - Sex ed is a way to do that, and we teach OWL in a way that centres love and justice.
- The body is the site of spirituality and sexuality, so the two are connected.
- Sexuality is part of our social selves that has traditionally been private and hidden - there is something spiritual about the act of bringing sexuality into the light.
- All life is interconnected, and people are interconnected through sexuality.
- As UUs, we try to create supportive, safe, learning communities, and OWL is a way to model that practice.
- Sexual experience can be transcendent, and offer a connection to something greater than ourselves.
- We are called to lifelong learning, development and pursuit of self-knowledge (through the “free and responsible search for truth and meaning”). OWL encourages people of all ages to learn more about themselves and what they believe to be true.
- Being a UU is an individual and ever-changing path, and so is individual sexuality.



What is ministry?

“The act of ministering to. It is a way that we are with each other in a mindful, nurturing way. Ministry is not something that only ordained ministers do. When we care for someone, when we stand with them through a struggle, when we help them learn and grow, we are engaging in ministry. When we offer programs that engage the heart, the mind, the body or the spirit in our congregations, we are engaging in ministry.”

How is sexuality education a form of ministry?

- It's a celebration of joys and pleasures
- Exploration and learning in a community
- Reaching out to others with love and care
- Reducing isolation and risk
- Collaborative approach to learning about your whole self
- Helping each other heal from traumas (fear, shame, past experiences) related to sexuality, as we help each other with other emotional challenges
- Being there for youth, witnessing their growth and walking alongside them in their journeys
- Models adults offering presence and witness to youth and forming healthy, boundaried relationships with youth (consistent with our other forms of youth ministry)
- Engages youth, builds community and helps people stay connected to us as a faith
- Spreads knowledge based on facts, and spreads our vision for a just world
- Engages the heart, mind, spirit and body
- It literally saves lives!
- Gives people a sense of wholeness and tells people that they are enough just as they are
- Offering support
- Engaging the heart
- Standing through struggle
- Free and responsible search for truth and meaning for ourselves
- Framework for healthy sexuality and healthy relationships
- Provides tools for people to have agency and make healthy decisions about their own sexual lives
- We support informed choices for people of all ages
- Sexuality is intrinsic to identity, and impacts the whole self
- UU values are the framework of the curriculum and infuse all that we do through the OWL program
- OWL facilitates the opportunity to be in service of a better world

For more about why sexuality education belongs in a religious setting, please consult the Unitarian Universalist Association's brochure "[Sexuality is Honoured Here](#)". Each OWL level curriculum also has a companion book called *Sexuality and Our Faith*, that offers religious context for the OWL material. These books are available from the [JUA Bookstore](#), along with the OWL curriculum books.

