

Workshop 4: Shared Leadership

Introduction

We approach youth ministry with the overarching goal of providing the thousands of current UU high school students with profound experiences of spiritual depth in order to: 1) value them as current members of our faith communities, thus practicing and modeling affirmation of each individual's inherent worth and dignity; and, 2) help them develop a lifelong commitment to, and leadership and sense of belonging within Unitarian Universalism. – Carey McDonald, Former Youth and Young Adult Ministries Director

This session describes the elements that comprise shared leadership and responsible youth empowerment.

Goals

This session will:

- Ask youth to think about how their strengths, weaknesses and growing edges may complement others in the group
- Introduce the concept of shared leadership as a spectrum of responsibility based on maturity, skill and capacity
- Explore the complexities of responsible youth empowerment through guided discussion.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Identify their strengths, weaknesses and growing edges and recognize they don't have to perfect every leadership skill to be great leaders
- Be introduced to the concept of shared leadership and recognize the importance of sharing leadership and collaborating with others
- Understand the meaning of responsible youth empowerment.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

ACTIVITY

MINUTES

Opening	10
Activity 1: Bingo	15
Activity 2: Shared Leadership Spectrum	10
Activity 3: Responsible Youth Empowerment	20
Closing	5

Spiritual Preparation

Think about a time when you witnessed what you would consider to be “Responsible Youth Empowerment.” How did you know it was responsible, what feelings did you have in that situation? Think about a time when you witnessed what you would consider “Not Responsible Youth Empowerment.” How did you feel in that situation? How could people have behaved differently to ensure it was “Responsible Youth Empowerment?”

Opening (10 minutes)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint and markers
- Chalice lighting words: Worship Web [So That We Might Shine Together](#) by Erik Walker Wikstrom

*When we light our chalice
everyone focuses on the flame.
Yet it is the paraffin of the candle,
the cotton of the wick,
the potassium chlorate and sulfur of the match,
and the oxygen in the air around us
that makes that flame possible.
As leaders we are not called to be
a lone beacon on a hill.*

*Rather, we are meant to work together
so that we might, together, shine.*

- Group covenant (from Workshop 2, Living in Covenant)
- Check in question:

What was a time you needed help from someone else?

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice lighting words on newsprint and post.
- Post the group covenant developed in Workshop 2, Living in Covenant.

Description of Activity

Welcome first-time participants. Invite participants and facilitators to go around the circle and say their names and briefly answer the check in question (in 3 or 4 sentences). Remind participants that check in is not a time for cross talk - clarifying questions can be asked if necessary. After everyone who wants to has had a chance to check in ask for a volunteer to light the chalice and another to read the chalice lighting words.

Including All Participants

Let participants know they have the right to pass or pass for now. For participants who have trouble being concise you can ask them “how would you sum up your experience in one sentence?” For participants who have trouble refraining from cross talk remind them of the group covenant and to be respectful of their peers’ time to share and the leaders’ time to facilitate.

Activity 1: Strengths, Weaknesses & Growing Edges Bingo (15 minutes)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, Blank Bingo Cards
- Newsprint and markers
- Pens or pencils for each participant

Preparation for Activity

- Write and post definitions of Strength, Weakness and Growing Edge.

- Make copies of handout for all participants.

Description of Activity

In this activity participants learn to identify their strengths, weaknesses and growing edges and recognize they don't have to perfect every leadership skill to be great leaders.

Pass out blank bingo cards, one for each participant. Tell participants to spend a moment thinking about their strengths, weaknesses and growing edges when it comes to leadership.

Share these definitions and examples:

A strength is a characteristic, skill or a talent that comes naturally or that you have practiced to proficiency. You may have a strength of following through on your commitments, listening to others without judgment or playing an instrument in front of a crowd, for example. A weakness is a characteristic you feel holds you back as a leader that you don't think you could or want to change and have to put systems in place to overcome. You may have a weakness of being overwhelmed by large crowds, staying focused for long periods of time or being an organized note-taker, for example. A growing edge is a characteristic, skill or talent that does not come naturally or that you want to develop further. You may have a growing edge of speaking up if you're naturally quiet, practicing self-care if you get easily overwhelmed by deadlines or being kind to yourself when you make a mistake, for example.

Tell participants to write one strength, weakness or growing edge in each box and try to have an equal number of strengths, weaknesses and growing edges. Tell participants not to label the attributes they write down as strengths, weaknesses or growing edges.

Say something like:

You are going to move around the room and play bingo for 5 minutes - with a twist. When you meet with another person, try to find a strength, weakness or a growing edge that complements one of your attributes. For example: person A might have "am very organized" and person B might have "leave things to the last minute." Or person A might have "very serious about getting things done" and person B might have "good sense of humor." Write the other person's name and attribute in the corresponding box on your bingo card. You might find that things you thought were weaknesses or growing edges complement someone else's.

When time is up (or when all boxes are filled, whichever comes first), lead a discussion asking questions like:

- What did you learn about yourself in this activity?
- What did you learn about others in the group in this activity?

End the discussion by making the observation that no one person has to embody all great leadership qualities to get things done.

Including All Participants

For participants with mobility issues, ask them if they'd prefer to sit in a chair and have people come to them. Monitor the group to ensure all participants visit the person in the chair. For participants with impaired sight, ask if they want another participant to partner with them and support their reading when helpful. For participants with reading or writing disabilities offer to serve as scribe as they dictate their answers to you and partner with them as they move about the room, filling out their card.

Activity 2: (10 minutes) Shared Leadership Spectrum

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, Youth/Adult Shared Leadership
- Newsprint and markers
- Dot stickers of any color
- Pens or pencils for each participant

Preparation for Activity

- Make copies of handout for all participants.
- Pass out pens or pencils
- Draw shared leadership spectrum on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

In this activity participants learn about the concept of shared leadership and recognize the importance of sharing leadership and collaborating with others.

Point to the shared leadership spectrum drawing Say something like:

In a shared leadership model no one person (youth or adult) has to do everything on their own. Leaders have guidance, support, mentorship, partnership and companionship from their fellow leaders. Finding leaders that complement your skill set is important for creating a dynamic team. Your skill level, capacity and maturity will determine where you fall on the spectrum of shared leadership and the level of support your fellow leaders can offer. As your skill level, capacity and maturity increases, support from your fellow leaders can decrease. And, in this setting, even if you are a very mature and skilled leader, we are still here to support and partner with you in your endeavors.

Tell participants to take a look at the shared leadership handout and put a pen or pencil mark on the line where they think they are developmentally. Tell participants that being self-aware of their own development no matter where they land on the spectrum is more important than being

(or saying they are) a highly skilled leader. Suggest that they can refer back to their bingo cards for guidance.

Invite participants to come up to the drawing and put a dot sticker and write their name on the spectrum in the same place they put their mark on their handout.

Including All Participants

For participants with mobility issues, ask if they want a fellow participant to place their dot on the drawing for them. If someone is uncomfortable sharing, remind them they have the right to pass, but encourage them to step outside their comfort zone and remind them we work to make this is a safe space free of judgement where we encourage one another on our spiritual journeys.

Activity 3: (20 minutes) Responsible Youth Empowerment

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1 Examples of Youth Empowerment
- Leader Resource 2 Responsible Youth Empowerment
- Newsprint and markers
- Tape or sticking putty

Preparation for Activity

- Review the [Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Summary Report from August 2007](#) before the session.
- Cut statements from Leader Resource 1
- Cut statements from Leader Resource 2 into strips.
- Label two sheets of newsprint “Responsible Youth Empowerment” or “Irresponsible Youth Empowerment” and post in the meeting room.

Description of Activity

In this activity participants explore and discuss the meaning of responsible youth empowerment.

Ask for two volunteers who are willing to read examples of youth empowerment aloud to the group. Give each of the two volunteers one of the examples from Leader Resource 1. Explain to the group that after they hear both examples they are going to vote on which example they believe is responsible youth empowerment and which example they believe is irresponsible youth empowerment. Ask the two volunteers to read their examples aloud, but tell them not to read the paragraph in the brackets yet, and then take a vote. After the vote, ask the volunteers

to read the paragraphs in brackets. If the vote was contentious, tell the group that some clarity may be provided and there will be room for more discussion in the second part of this activity.

Hand out the strips from Leader Resource 2 with tape or sticking putty and invite participants to place them on the designated newsprint - “Responsible Youth Empowerment” or “Irresponsible Youth Empowerment” where they believe the statements belong.

Once all statements have been posted, take time to consider any statements that ended up in the wrong category. Some may be nuanced and contested. Invite participants who are having trouble identifying what responsible youth empowerment looks like to read the [Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Summary Report from August 2007](#). If disagreements continue past the time you have allotted for this activity, summarize or ask a participant to summarize what they’ve heard in the discussion to acknowledge what has been said.

Say something like:

The concept of youth empowerment has been a cornerstone of Unitarian Universalist youth ministry for a long time and is ever evolving. Conversations like this help us clarify for ourselves and one another what we mean when we use the term. I encourage you to carry on this exploration by paying attention to experiences you have that feel like responsible youth empowerment and ask your peers and adults whose opinion you trust what their understanding of responsible youth empowerment is.

You can offer that the group can carry on the conversation at a later date or in a closed Facebook group if your group has one.

Including All Participants

For participants with reading disabilities, ask if they want to choose a fellow participant to partner with. For participants with mobility issues, ask if they want to tell a fellow participant to place their strip on the newsprint.

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and markers, computer and projector, or Singing the Journey hymnals (enough for two or three people to share one)
- Taking it Home
- Lean on Me YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/MY10AoXIOwE>

Preparation for Activity

- Practice the song # 1021 Lean on Me.

- Write the lyrics to the song on newsprint or cue the video or set out hymnals for participants.
- Make copies of Taking It Home for each participant.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to gather in a circle. Thank everyone for their contributions to the group. Pass out Taking It Home and explain that it contains ideas for ways they can continue to explore workshop topics with family and friends.

You can offer that the group can continue a discussion about this session at a later date or in a closed Facebook group if your group has one. End the workshop by inviting the group to sing #1021 in Singing the Journey, Lean on Me. The group can sing a cappella or along with the video.

Leader Reflection and Planning

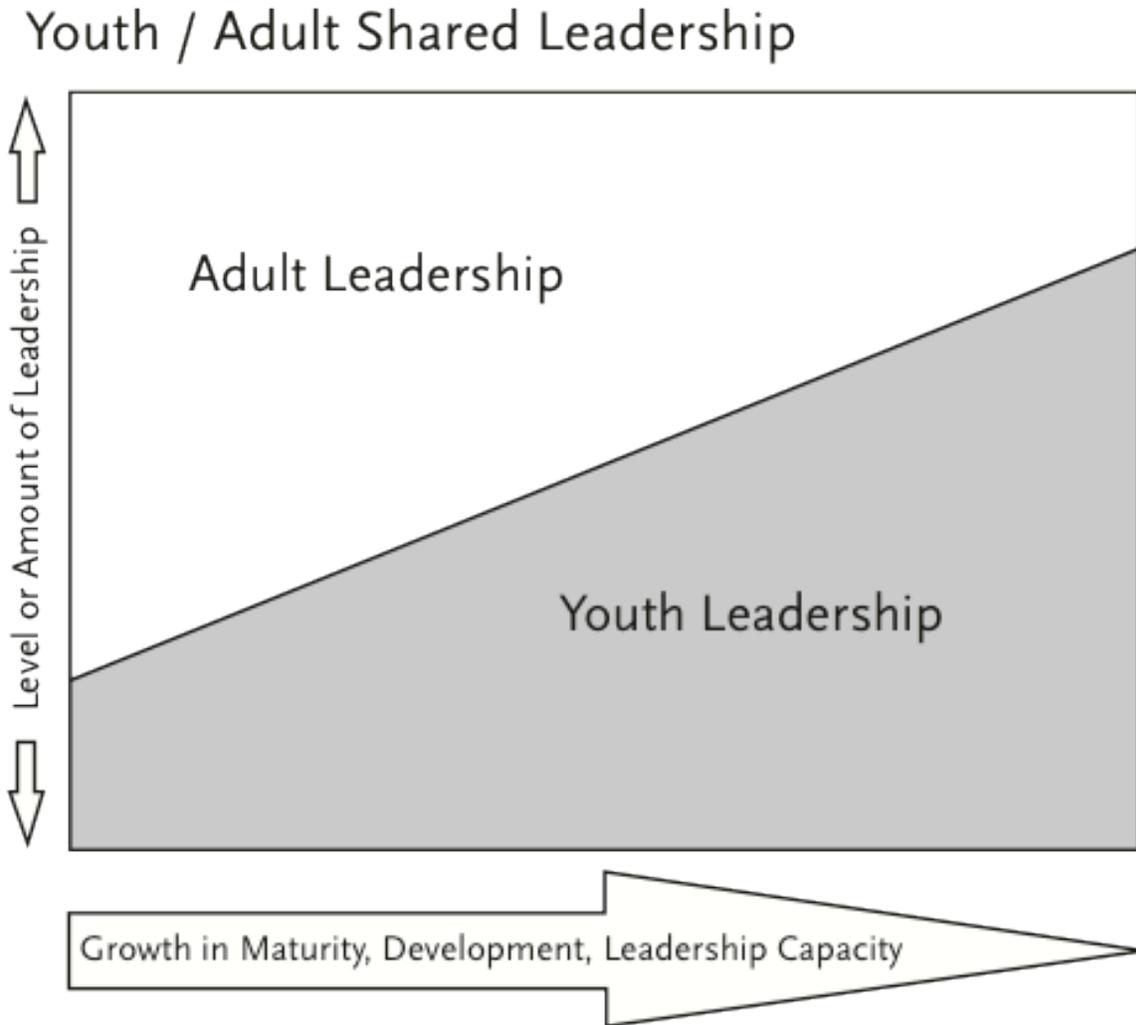
As leaders working with youth in a Unitarian Universalist context, this workshop offered an opportunity to focus on supporting one another in our leadership journeys. Were you surprised by how participants self-assessed their strengths, weaknesses, growing edges and leadership capacity? Did your understanding or ability to explain responsible youth empowerment increase from facilitating this workshop? What did you as co-leaders learn from your co-facilitator? Share your feedback and learnings from this session with the minister and religious educator.

Handout 1: Blank Bingo Card

For each box, write one strength, weakness OR growing edge. Try to have an equal number of strengths, weaknesses and growing edges. Don't label the attributes you write down as strengths, weaknesses or growing edges.

Handout 2: Youth Adult Shared Leadership

Attribution: Ministry with Youth Renaissance module by Jesse Jaeger.



Taking It Home

We approach youth ministry with the overarching goal of providing the thousands of current UU high school students with profound experiences of spiritual depth in order to: 1) value them as current members of our faith communities, thus practicing and modeling affirmation of each individual's inherent worth and dignity; and, 2) help them develop a lifelong commitment to, and leadership and sense of belonging within Unitarian Universalism. – Carey McDonald, Former Youth and Young Adult Ministries Director

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we identified our strengths, weaknesses and growing edges and recognized we don't have to perfect every leadership skill to be great leaders. We were introduced to the concept of shared leadership and recognized the importance of sharing leadership and collaborating with others. We also explored the meaning of responsible youth empowerment.

INCREASING YOUR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY: Take a look at your bingo card. Identify one or two growing edges you listed. Set a small goal you can accomplish in one week to increase your leadership capacity in that area. Maybe it's reading an article on the topic, identifying a mentor or a role model that has that quality or finding an experience that will stretch you in that area.

CARRY ON THE CONVERSATION: Ask three people you consider mentors or role models (youth and adults) where they think you land on the shared leadership spectrum for a specific task or leadership role. Ask three people whose opinion you trust how they would define responsible youth empowerment. Do you agree with them? Read the [Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Summary Report from August 2007](#) on UUA.org.

ENGAGE IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Find someone you trust and ask them if they would like to do partner yoga with you. Follow along with this video, or choose a few poses, or asanas, to practice with your partner: <https://youtu.be/Uh5ADKbrSBU>. Notice how you have to balance your strength and flexibility with your partner's.

Leader Resource 1: Youth Empowerment Examples

Example 1:

The youth group has been asked to lead a worship service in six weeks. One person in the group has participated in leading Sunday service before, and three youth total have been to a Sunday service this year. They use the majority of their group time over the next six weeks to plan the worship service with the youth group advisor. The advisor makes sure to stay out of their way and not impose their ideas on the group. By the third week of planning there is a small, but very committed group of youth attending youth group to plan. Overall, the worship service goes well, although some youth feel it could have gone better, and the rest of the congregation gives the youth group a lot of praise.

[This is an example of irresponsible youth empowerment. Youth are asked to do something that is beyond their skill level, capacity or experience with little to no help from trusted adults. Youth who were not invested in the process dropped out of youth group. Even though the end result of the service was mostly positive, the process was not supported and the youth group did not learn all they could about planning Sunday services. While the youth who participated in the service received praise, they did not receive feedback from trusted adults or have time to process how they felt the service went.]

Example 2:

The minister attends a youth group session and asks what interest the youth have in planning a Sunday worship service. There are mixed levels of experience in and excitement about planning the service. The minister invites youth who are interested, but have very little experience, to participate in lighting the chalice or doing a reading once or twice before committing to planning worship. The youth who have experience and excitement are invited to become worship associates to help plan a few Sunday services. The youth who are not excited are invited to attend a few worship services throughout the year. After each youth has gained experience, the minister asks the group again and commits to helping them bring their ideas to life for a worship service at the end of the year. Those who are interested stay after youth group for 30 minutes over the course of a month to plan it. Overall, the worship service goes well and the minister and other trusted adults provide healthy and helpful feedback.

[This is an example of responsible youth empowerment. A person who usually plans worship (the minister) invites youth into a conversation about their comfort level and excitement about planning worship. The minister then invites youth to develop their skills at a level that is appropriate for them. The youth who are not interested in taking on a leadership role are not excluded from youth group because planning happens after youth group. The minister shares their experience and skills with the planning group and commits to lifting up the group's vision. The group receives feedback, which adds to their learning experience.]

Leader Resource 2: Responsible Youth Empowerment

Attribution: [Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Summary Report August 2007](#)

Cut these statements into strips for use in Activity 3. When handing out the strips during the activity, do not indicate to participants to which category the statements correspond.

Responsible:

Love and trust between youth and adults, between youth and youth, and between adults and adults

Mentoring relationships among children, youth, and adults, which draw from direct experience and wisdom

The development of youth confidence and self-identity through building community, learning to use their voices effectively, and realizing a more robust expression of themselves

Encouragement for all to grow together in accountability

Youth defining their issues and participating in the decisions that affect their lives and impact their communities

Youth and adults having access to information through direct and honest communication expressed with grace, humility, and respect

Trust in the competence of youth skills and insights

Appreciation of the prophetic wisdom and energy of youth to be agents of social change, justice, and service

The recognition that youth ministry is an integral Unitarian Universalist ministry and part of our collective past, present, and future

Irresponsible:

A gift that the adults in the congregation give to youth because they are inherently disempowered

Youth have complete control over the decisions about youth programming for the year

Inviting the youth into the sanctuary or Sunday worship space only when they perform a youth-led worship

Accepting that when youth make mistakes they do not need to be held accountable because mistakes are part of the learning process

Youth keeping issues that impact the health of the community in confidence and only giving information on a need to know basis

Equal rights for every person in the congregation

Hand holding, coddling and hovering to help youth make more adult decisions

A struggle for power within the congregation

People in youth ministry working independently of the mission, vision and covenant of their congregation, district/region or community

Adult presence and input is minimal; holding the space means continually stepping back

Facilitator Feedback Form

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations.

You may choose to [complete this feedback form online](#).

Otherwise, please forward your feedback to:
Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
youth@uua.org

OR

Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
Ministries and Faith Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1409

Workshops You Field Tested: *

- Workshop 1: Web of Youth Ministry
- Workshop 2: Living in Covenant
- Workshop 3: Meaning of Leadership Worship
- Workshop 4: Shared Leadership
- Workshop 5: Active Listening
- Workshop 6: Creating Inclusive Community
- Workshop 7: Leadership Styles
- Workshop 8: Building Multigenerational Connections
- Workshop 9: Conflict Resolution and Transformation

Number of Participants: * _____

Age Range: * _____

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)? *

Yes No

Congregation: * _____

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

Your Name: _____

Your Email: * _____

Participant Feedback Form

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations.

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Workshops You Participated In: *

- Workshop 1: Web of Youth Ministry
- Workshop 2: Living in Covenant
- Workshop 3: Meaning of Leadership Worship
- Workshop 4: Shared Leadership
- Workshop 5: Active Listening
- Workshop 6: Creating Inclusive Community
- Workshop 7: Leadership Styles
- Workshop 8: Building Multigenerational Connections
- Workshop 9: Conflict Resolution and Transformation

Your Age: * _____

Congregation: * _____

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

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What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

Your Name: _____

Your Email: * _____