



YOUTH MINISTRY TRAINING SERIES | 2016 - 2017

COMPETENCY #8: ABLE TO WORK AS A TEAM

**A PRODUCT OF THE YOUTH MINISTRY ROUND
TABLE OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION**

About this workshop:

This is a workshop compiled by UUA staff Evin Carvill-Ziemer and Natalie Briscoe to be facilitated by Directors of Religious Education, Ministers, Youth Coordinators or other staff supporting youth advisors or serving in youth ministry. This can be run either for one congregation or a cluster. It can be part of a longer advisor training or run as a stand-alone program.

This is part of a year-long series based on the [Competencies for Ministry to and with Youth](#) offered by the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and UUA Regional Field Staff. Other competencies were covered through webinars, but this competency better lends itself to an interactive workshop.

Flexibility is built into the fabric of this workshop. The content detailed here is about 3.5 hours. It can be lead in two sessions, or some of the activities can be given as pre-work, or you can select the parts needed for your program. Not every question in every exercise will be pertinent to every program, thereby allowing you to tailor your presentation to your audience and the needs of your program.

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About Youth Ministry Competency #8

Entry Level: Understands one's responsibility as a member of a team

Basic: Able to: • Mentor others and be mentored by others • Form a collaborative relationship with religious professionals, parents, and elected congregational leaders Understands: • Lines of accountability and supervision

Advanced: Able to: • Do evaluation of self, program, and team • Skillfully manage change and conflict • Be a non-anxious presence in the congregation • Share resources or learnings with similar or aspirational congregations Understands: • Family systems theory • How anxiety affects a system • How to recognize and identify sources of anxiety that are affecting a youth program, for example, youth anxieties, adults' anxiety about youth group

Spiritual Preparation for Leaders

This workshop is all about bringing your whole self to the experience of ministry to and with youth. Read through the exercises and, if possible, work through them with a group of co-leaders or other trusted individuals in your congregation. In confronting our own strengths and weaknesses, unexpected emotions may

arise. Don't try to explain away your emotions. Instead, sit with them and honor them. Become aware if any embarrassment arises and take care of yourself, feeling the love and support that surrounds you. Express gratitude for your partners on this journey – those on your Youth Ministry team – and for all the strengths AND weaknesses they bring.

Take several deep breaths and center yourself. If you have a regular spiritual practice, do it just before leading this workshop. Visualize yourself climbing a very tall, very rough mountain. You reach up to place your hand on the next stone, but instead find a person there who grabs your hand and helps lift you to the next step. This happens again and again until you reach a summit. Grateful for the help that allowed you to climb the mountain, you reach out your hand and find a hand of a person climbing below you. You grab the hand and lift them to the next summit, above your head. Take a few more deep breaths. You are ready to go.

Homework/Pre-Work (Optional)

Prepare the UUA's Youth Ministry Competencies to share (http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/ym_competencies.pdf) or ask participants to read through them before this workshop and contemplate what areas of growth they may like to focus on in the upcoming year or where they might especially need support in their development.

Opening/Centering (10 Minutes)

Objectives:

1. Open the workshop in holy space
2. Participate in our Unitarian Universalist Tradition by lighting a Chalice

Materials:

Altar with Chalice

Preparation:

Create an altar as a focal point of your time together. Make sure there is a Chalice that can be lit in some way.

Plan: Invite the participants into your gathering space. Thank them for giving their time and attention to Ministry with Youth.

Light the Chalice with the following words from an anonymous source:

May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations,

And inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,

But connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe,

To this community, and to each other.

At this time, you may have some other words of gathering, or you may ask the participants to introduce themselves.

The Ideal UU Youth Advisor (15 Minutes)

Objectives:

1. Model effective brainstorming for participants.
2. Visualize some of the characteristics of a hypothetical ideal youth advisor.

3. Point out that no one can possibly embody all characteristics of the ideal youth advisor.

Materials:

Pad of large paper and easel

Markers

Masking tape

Plan:

Review the rules of good brainstorming, including: When brainstorming, you don't criticize anyone's idea, you just get as many ideas out there as possible. Turn off the inner censor! Everyone should feel compelled to get at least one idea out there!

Tell the group that you will now brainstorm the characteristics of the ideal UU youth advisor.

This can be done by making a brainstormed list but is much more fun and effective if the notes are more visual. Start with an image of an advisor (stick figure is fine!) and draw images and use minimal words to capture the brainstorming energy. The point here is not about drawing skill, but using visuals to engage more creatively.

After the initial wave of brainstorming, ask any of these questions that get at areas of youth advising that haven't been raised:

What are the characteristics of an ideal youth advisor in...

relating to parents?

working with other advisors?

relating to the religious professionals in the congregation?

Process brainstorming:

Explain how to process brainstorming:

- First, eliminate utterly random and truly wacky ideas ("the ideal advisor owns a parrot!").
- Don't try to reach consensus on the exact characteristics of the ideal youth advisor, but do try to get the focus closer to an image that is recognizable
- Move through this relatively quickly with not a lot of argument.

As you and the participants sort through the results of the brainstorming, it's almost inevitable that some of the points brought up in the brainstorming will be contradictory ("the ideal advisor lets youth run the whole show" vs. "the ideal advisor will intervene to prevent total disasters"). This is often because advisors need different characteristics depending on things like the experience of the

group, or the context or the situation. Point out that being an advisor is always a balancing act, and you are constantly shifting roles.

Self-inventory: Invite each participant to briefly do a self-inventory. Give each participant a different color marker to make a mark next to the characteristics or skills they have.

Teamwork (30 Minutes Total)

Objectives:

1. Review the strengths and weaknesses participants bring to youth work.
2. Strategize with co-advisors to determine how best to work together.

Materials:

Easel, large paper, markers
Masking tape
Index cards
Pens

Preparation: Consider if there's a specific upcoming task to use as focus for this exercise

Discussion (5 Minutes)

Look again at the ideal youth advisor sheet together

What patterns do you notice?

Are there things our team is particularly strong in? Not so strong in?

Brainstorming: Strengths and Weaknesses (15 Minutes)

If there is a specific upcoming task that can be used as an example, this can be helpful. If this is a cluster training, maybe there's an event later in the year that's a specific event. Or congregations can be grouped together and asked to focus on a particular upcoming project. If you are doing this workshop at a time of year where there is not something coming up soon to focus on, pick something generic. (e.g. "Pretend we are supporting the youth in a series of bake sale fundraisers for a trip.")

Give participants an index card each, and ***thinking of this project***, ask them to write down five skills and/or qualities that they bring to their ministry to and with youth. Next, list five skills that they want to develop as an advisor, and next, five attributes that may be important, but that they don't have. For example:

Skills I have:

Listening
Commitment
I drive a van

Skills to Develop:

Organizational
Sharing Leadership
Patience

Skills I don't Have:

Public Speaking
Raising Money
Music

Ask congregational teams to share their lists with each other. They should note the ways in which their skills are compatible and the ways in which their skills are complementary. They should also take note of any areas in which there may be skills missing. Encourage the teams to think about others on their team and what skills they have--this includes youth, parents, other congregational leaders. Strategize ways that they can work together to compensate for areas where they do not have expertise, or maybe talk about recruiting another advisor or more youth leaders who do have those skills.

Take home message: a key reason we work in teams is that we complement and strengthen one another in the ministry we do.

Mentoring/Support Discussion (10 Minutes)

Return to the previous discussion on skills of advisors and team work. Stress that each person on a team is important because it would be impossible to have all of the skills listed.

Call attention to the "skills to develop" column. Just as we are all not going to be the "perfect youth advisor," we all have goals for the ways in which we want to develop and the skills we want to gain. It is important to remain coachable and ask our teammates for feedback and guidance as we learn these new skills. Just as adults are mentors for youth, adults can be mentored by others on the team or in the congregation. Not only does being mentored and coached open up new learning and growth possibilities, but it also shows the youth a model for lifelong learning.

You may have adults who have spent a long time in youth ministry. It will be key to help them see that the world is continuing to change and evolve such that no matter how long one has been in youth ministry there is more to learn.

Challenge the participants to all find:

One thing they want to be mentored in from the team
One thing they're noticing other people may want to learn that they can be the mentor for

Ask people to commit to each other to support each other in this learning--in being a mentor and in learning.

Facilitators' Note: It's possible you'll have some resistance to this from long term advisors. We hope that by encouraging everyone to find something that they're needing to learn that this can be a nudge to shift dynamics where one or more adults are just the experts and don't listen to anyone. If this is unsuccessful, you have at least presented being able to be mentored and learn as a key competency for youth advisors and you can return to have an individual feedback conversation with this person about this being an area that you see as key for youth advisors, including them.

Supervision and Support (30 Minutes Total)

Objectives:

1. Discuss the roles of supervision for youth advisors
2. Gain an understanding of the support systems in place for youth advisors

Materials:

Copies of Handouts: Supervisors and Supporters

Preparation:

Make copies of the handouts for each participant

Presentation (5 Minutes)

Give a brief presentation, in your words or read ours: Youth advisors often need support. And youth advisors should be supervised by someone. Sometimes it seems that the youth advisors work for the parents. They don't! They work for the mission of the congregation and *someone* is responsible for supervising and supporting them and the youth program. Who supervises both the youth program and the volunteer or paid youth staff should be clear to everyone. Does the DRE supervise? The minister? (This can be made clear in job descriptions for volunteer advisors as well as paid staff)

There should be lines of accountability for the leadership of the youth group, too. If there is a congregational “youth adult committee,” where does that fall in the congregation’s governance structure?

Being clear on accountability before there are conflicts and problems is hugely helpful.

Then give the following handout

HANDOUT: POSSIBLE SUPPORT AND SUPERVISORS

Possible Support and Supervisors For Youth Ministry

Possible Supervisors for Youth Advisors:

- Director/Minister of Religious Education
- Religious Education Committee (rarely, when there are no religious education staff)
- Parish Minister
- Youth Director or Program Consultant
- Board (rarely and only if there are no staff or relevant committees)

Possible Supporters for Youth Advisors:

- Any of your Supervisors
- Friends
- Advisors (including of other faiths, and from local or district/regional community)
- Spouse/Partner
- LREDA Good Offices Person
- District/Regional Staff
- UUA Youth Office
- Advisor-I@uua.org
- Fellow Trainees from advisor trainings
- People outside of the congregation
- Consistent support groups w/ regular meetings

Where not to find support for Youth Advisors:

- Youth
- Parents of youth

Possible Supporters for Youth Leaders:

- Other youth leaders
- Youth Advisors
- Your parents
- Director/Minister of Religious Education
- Religious Education Committee
- Parish Minister
- Youth/Adult Committee
- Youth Director or Program Consultant
- Board
- Facebook groups for youth leaders
- District/Regional Staff
- UUA Youth Office
- Fellow trainees from leadership programs
- Friends and family outside the congregation

Where not to find support for Youth Leaders:

- Youth entangled in the sources of tension (try not to triangulate other youth!)
- Parents of other youth, especially parents of youth causing problems
- Younger, newer youth not involved in leadership

Youth Ministry Supervision and Support Case Studies (25 Minutes)

Objectives:

1. Explore opportunities for supervision and support of Youth Advisors using case studies
2. Find some scenarios that may come up in the context of Youth Ministry

Materials:

Copies of Handouts: Case Studies

Preparation:

Make copies of the handouts for each participant

Plan:

In a small group, pick one case study explore. In a larger group, split the group between the case studies and have the group report back on their discussion.

Discussion questions for use with case studies:

- *What support do the advisors need in this circumstance?*
- *What did the advisors either not know, forgot, or ignored?*
- *What is the role of the supervisor of the youth advisor in responding to this situation?*
- *What could the supervisor have done to prevent this situation?*

HANDOUT: CASE STUDY A – WHICH HAT ARE YOU WEARING?

Two youth advisors in a congregation are married and often host youth overnights without other adults present. They even do summer hiking trips open to UU youth from the area that they advertise as clearly neither a congregational nor district event. One year a congregational youth parent comes to the minister for pastoral care after his son is hospitalized because of severe self-harming. While providing pastoral care to the youth, the minister discovers that at a youth overnight, hosted by two youth advisors, this youth disclosed his cutting in the evening worship. One of the advisors who used to be a therapist sat down with him and talked him through why he cuts and what he can do instead. She made a plan with him and had him promise not to cut, but did not inform the minister or DRE. The minister surmises that the other youth saw this conversation happening and assumed everything that needed to be done was done.

HANDOUT: CASE STUDY B: BOUNDARIES?

The minister checks in informally with each of the four advisors when he sees them. One of them shares his gratitude that Kelly is able to support the youth as well as she does. She's really good at listening and supporting them. Apparently one of the youth has slept at her house a few times recently when the youth didn't feel safe being at home because of conflict with her parents. When the minister speaks to Kelly she immediately defends her actions as keeping the youth safe saying, "someone has to do it!"

Healthy Leadership (60 Minutes Total)

It's important for adults working with youth to have some understanding of healthy leadership concepts. This is a very brief overview.

Introduction to Systems Theory (30 Minutes)

Objectives:

1. Gain an understanding of Family Systems Theory
2. Understand anxiety in a church system
3. Learn techniques for managing personal anxiety

Materials:

Video for video presentation, either downloaded or streamed

Preparation:

Prepare to show the video presentation in the manner that is easiest

Read through the case studies and be prepared to answer questions that arise

Plan:

Start by watching this video and answering any questions that come up if these concepts are new for your advisors:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgdcljNV-Ew>

Next, discuss the following:

- *Where is there anxiety in your youth program now? What anxieties are there from the youth? From the parents?*
- *How do the advisors get triangulated into that anxiety?*
- *Are there any particular case studies from now or the recent past that you'd like to discuss using the ideas of triangulation, self-differentiation?*

Case Studies in Systems Theory (30 Minutes)

Objectives:

1. Explore Systems Theory using case studies
2. Find some scenarios that may come up in the context of Youth Ministry

Materials:

Copies of Handouts: Case Studies

Preparation:

Make copies of the two handouts for each participant

If the group came up with examples or their own case studies in the previous exercise, process them using the following questions:

Case study discussion questions:

- *Where is the anxiety?*
- *Where are the triangles?*
- *How can the advisor be self-differentiated?*
- *Whose problem is this?*
- *How can they be helped to solve their own problem?*
- *Who else could be brought in, helpfully, to respond to this situation?*
- *Who needs to know about this conversation?*

If they did not come up with an example or case study, use the case studies on the handouts to process Systems Theory in one large group. Use the same questions as above.

HANDOUT: SYSTEMS THEORY CASE STUDY PART ONE

What happens outside youth group, stays.....?

A youth leader is confused what to do and seeks assistance from an advisor. Other youth are being exclusive--they go hangout after youth group and not everyone is invited to go. The youth leader doesn't like the social dynamics that are being generated. Oh, and if it matters, they're probably smoking pot. At least that's what several of the organizers of these outings are known to do with their free time. The youth leader knows that if her parent knew about the pot smoking, she wouldn't be allowed to attend these gatherings, so she doesn't. But she feels left out and badly for the other youth left out.

Case study discussion questions:

- *Where is the anxiety?*
- *Where are the triangles?*
- *How can the advisor be self-differentiated?*
- *Whose problem is this?*
- *How can they be helped to solve their own problem?*
- *Who else could be brought in, helpfully, to respond to this situation?*
- *Who needs to know about this conversation?*

SYSTEMS THEORY CASE STUDY PART TWO

Continuing the case study above, a few weeks later, a parent of a different youth pulls two advisors aside at coffee hour to complain that the youth program isn't meeting her son's needs. He needs more activity—more things to DO. Less sitting around and talking. The advisors try to calm her down but it doesn't work. She finally blurts out, "do you all know that the youth in this church are just potheads?!"

Case study discussion questions:

- *Where is the anxiety?*
- *Where are the triangles?*
- *How can the advisor be self-differentiated?*
- *Whose problem is this?*
- *How can they be helped to solve their own problem?*
- *Who else could be brought in, helpfully, to respond to this situation?*
- *Who needs to know about this conversation?*

Setting Goals (30 Minutes total)

Once again, visit the UUA's Youth Ministry Competencies or pass out paper copies of the 8 competencies (http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/ym_competencies.pdf, pages 2-11).

Remind participants that youth ministry is the kind of thing no one ever has mastered. We are all growing and we all have more to learn.

Set Individual Goals (15 Minutes)

Invite participants to reflect silently on this list considering what their growing edges are and what support they'd like as they continue their ministry to and with youth. Ask each participant to write a short note to you (or their supervisor if you are not their supervisor) about what their goals for the next year.

Set Team Goals (15 Minutes):

As a team, look through the competencies and discuss which ones are most important for your program to continue to develop. Where might the gaps be? How will you handle those gaps? What are your priorities in development for the upcoming year, and how will you accomplish that?

Check Out and Wrap Up (10 Minutes)

Invite each participants to answer one or more of these questions:

*What new thing did you learn today or what were you reminded of?
What further conversations are you noticing we should have?*

Benediction/Closing (10 Minutes)

Thank the participants again for their time and work during this session.
Extinguish the Chalice with the following reading:

*Hold on to what is good
even if it is
a handful of earth.*

*Hold on to what you believe
even if it is
a tree which stands by itself.*

*Hold on to what you must do
even if it is
a long way from here.*

*Hold on to my hand even when
I have gone away from you.*

- Nancy Wood