

Code of Ethics for Peer Leaders in Young Adult and Campus Ministry

Unitarian Universalist Association Office of Young Adult and Campus Ministry
Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network

Preamble

Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to be in right relationship with people, to respect ourselves and others, and to use our power in responsible and accountable ways. As leaders in our groups and communities, we understand that we have been entrusted with a certain degree of power and authority. Leadership comes with a special responsibility to use our power in a manner consistent with our values and principles as Unitarian Universalists. Thus, we agree to the following code of ethics as part of our leadership role, hoping to serve as a model for others in our group or community.

Self

As I seek to maintain a healthy standard of self-care and faith development:

I will be aware of my own needs and preferences and, given the influence of my role, act responsibly in fulfilling them only under appropriate circumstances.

I will model self-care by respecting myself, recognizing my physical, emotional, and psychological needs, and seeking appropriate allies and professionals (when needed) with whom to process my feelings and concerns.

I will manage my time in order to honor my need for physical and spiritual renewal so that my needs do not interrupt or undermine my work as a peer leader.

I will actively pursue my own faith development and enrichment.

Interpersonal

As I work to foster healthy relationships where there is mutual growth:

I will act only in those ways which affirm the inherent worth and dignity of, promote justice, equity and compassion between, and encourage the spiritual growth of individuals with whom I have an interpersonal relationship.

I acknowledge that spirituality and sexuality are each a piece of each other. As a leader in a spiritual community, I shall honor any commitments I have made to myself and others. I will not engage in behavior that is damaging to any of my relationships or the relationships of others.

If I choose to engage intimate or sexual relationships with others, I will seek to keep them healthy. Healthy relationships are consensual, non-exploitative, mutually pleasurable, safe, developmentally appropriate, caring, based on mutual expectations, and respectful.

Before becoming intimately involved with a member of my group or community, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, and intentions, as well as the actual and potential consequences of my decisions for myself, the other person and the group or community.

I will value explicit consent at every level in my intimate relationships, and I will be careful not to assume implied consent. This includes consent for physical contact of any kind as well as verbal and other nonverbal intimacies.

I recognize that as a leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am in a relationship of faith. I will refrain from practices that allow me to meet my own needs in ways that potentially take advantage of others.

I will not abuse my authority by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs. Examples of this include but are not restricted to intimate or sexualized behavior with any child or youth, any vulnerable adult seeking advice and comfort from me as a leader, any adult in a committed relationship without the informed consent of everyone involved, or anyone for whom my leadership is necessary in order to maintain our relationship.

I will not engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, group, congregation, or institution has placed in me.

I will seek to engage conflict in healthy ways, including the use of open, direct, honest, compassionate and constructive communication. I will seek the mediation of third parties as needed, with the goals of maintaining respect for all people involved and restoring working relationships with them.

Group

As I work to create a welcoming and safe environment by modeling and encouraging behaviors that support sustainable, growing and healthy faith communities:

Respecting our commitment to creating diverse and inclusive communities, I will serve all members of my group or community regardless of age, race/ethnicity/culture, gender/gender expression, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, socioeconomic status, theology/faith expression, national origin or primary language.

I understand that every person in my group or community has many identities, and I will seek to learn how my identities impact my values, beliefs and behaviors. I also understand that not everyone can always bring their whole selves to our community. I will strive to create an environment and group understanding that values all identities and viewpoints and fosters inclusivity and justice.

I will recognize that my leadership is by the consent of the group and that my decisions and actions as a leader are on the group's behalf.

I will recognize my contributions to the tone and culture of the group, taking special care in how I conduct my relationships and understanding the long-term ramifications of my behavior.

I know that people come to young adult and campus ministry groups and events with a wide range of needs and wants. In order to be appropriately respectful of these many expectations and to help create a space that is welcoming to newcomers, I will not set a sexualized tone in my role as a leader.

I will empower and support my peers in developing their gifts, skills and talents; I will encourage leadership in others by sharing opportunities, knowledge, responsibilities, and rewards; and I will share responsibility for community well-being with my peers.

I will build positive, respectful relationships with my predecessors and successors to help build a continuum of strong, supportive young adult leadership. Further, I will support, rather than infringe upon, the roles of other leaders in our movement.

I will respect that as a leader, I may have access to information that must be kept in confidence, and I acknowledge the power this gives me. I will use discretion in sharing such information so as to avoid harm to individuals or the community. I understand that my leadership role requires careful discernment (though not necessarily confidentiality) and will seek help if I am concerned about the safety of an individual or of the group.

I will not speak disrespectfully or disparagingly of any other leaders in public. In conversations critical of others, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

I will respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make my personal form of spiritual expression normative.

I will use the resources and finances of the community/institution responsibly.

I will do my best to prepare myself for my roles and responsibilities as a leader, including seeking training and continuing education when possible and necessary.

Wider Movement

As I seek to keep connected to our larger faith in its diverse manifestations:

I will seek both to hear and to be accountable to diverse voices. I will seek to understand the dynamics of oppression on personal and institutional levels and their relationship to my leadership role. Further, I will actively work to dismantle structures of injustice and oppression whenever possible.

I will be a responsible representative of the Unitarian Universalist faith and participate in those activities which strengthen its unity, witness, and mission.

I will recognize and respect my ties to the larger family of our Unitarian Universalist faith, remaining ever mindful of our seven principles in my words and deeds.

I will seek to model environmental consciousness and sustainability in my leadership, understanding our faith's affirmation of respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

I will model respect for other faith traditions and the individual spiritual paths of all with whom I am in community.

I will encourage the growth of our faith and the spread of the ideals of Unitarian Universalist traditions and fellowship.

I will participate and encourage others to participate in meetings and activities of our Association.

I will encourage financial support of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Canadian Unitarian Council, their member congregations and associated programs.

I will inform appropriate leaders in advance of any public engagement that I may be asked to undertake in their communities or congregations.

Larger Community

As I am mindful of how our faith work and practices are connected to our larger community and the world:

I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my state or province regarding the reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.

I will be aware of and comply with all applicable campus, congregational, organizational, and/or district/regional policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safety, and medical emergency policies.

I understand that whenever I participate in the wider community, I represent Unitarian Universalism and will endeavor to provide a living model of ethical and religious leadership for people of all ages and circumstances.