

Support for Youth Struggling with Addiction

Video and Discussion Guide

How to Use This Workshop

This video and discussion comprise a one-hour workshop. The youth view an [animated video](#) (8:23) that covers the signs and symptoms of addiction and the role of faith communities with regard to youth and their families in a struggle against addiction.

The workshop is suitable for a group of youth the facilitators believe can approach the topic with a basic maturity. Before leading this workshop, facilitators should attend at least one Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and at least one AlAnon meeting to get a better understanding of addiction from two sides of the disease.

As part of this workshop, the participants explore forming an ongoing small group for youth struggling with addiction. This workshop suggests the model of Commit 2 Community InSide Out groups, an addiction support initiative for faith communities designed by UU youth for youth. InSide Out groups function as small group ministry, or covenant groups, and have been provided at many UUA General Assemblies. Handout 2 gives the history, purpose, and implementation format of InSide Out groups. Handout 3 is an InSide Out Facilitator's Guide including a sample session.

Before leading the workshop, especially if you do not expect this gathering will generate an ongoing group, identify local resources for youth and add these to Handout 4. Ask your congregation's ministry team for appropriate suggestions, including local UU or UUA cluster, district, or regional contacts for InSide Out programs.

Materials

- Chalice and lighter
- Computer with Internet access and large monitor or digital projector
- Pens/pencils
- Handout 1, Definitions and Challenges
- Handout 2, Commit 2 Community and InsideOut Groups
- Handout 3, InSide Out Facilitator Guide
- Handout 4, Follow-Up Resources
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Creating a Safe Environment

The workshop asks youth to engage with the multi-layered issue of substance non-use/use/abuse. While this engagement can be empowering, it can also be painful. The video covers topics that may cause some youth emotional discomfort related to how substance use or abuse has impacted their life. It is recommended that your minister, a lay minister or chaplain, or another adult experienced in pastoral care be present. You may

also arrange for Rev. Dr. Monica L. Cummings, UUA Program Associate for Ministry to Youth and Young Adults of Color, to participate in this workshop in person or via Skype.

If the group has already made a covenant, re-introduce it at the start of the workshop. If any participants have not worked together before, immediately after the Opening guide the group to affirm a simple covenant. Make sure these points are included:

- Confidentiality: What is said in this group stays in this group.
- Speaking from personal experience: Speak for yourself, and allow others space to speak for themselves.
- Affirming everyone's right to their experiences and opinions: When needed, respectfully agree to disagree.

Video

Gather the group where all can see and hear the video. Play the video.

Opening

Light the chalice with these opening words. Have co-leaders read alternate lines. Or, provide these words to all the youth for a group responsive reading:

Youth empowerment is...

The struggle for voices of youth to be recognized.

Youth empowerment is...

Youth being trusted and knowing it.

Youth empowerment is...

When adults and youth work together—a necessary balance.

Youth empowerment is...

Supporting others in finding their own power.

Youth empowerment is...

Youth having a chance to join the discussions that affect their experiences.

Youth empowerment is...

Encouragement, and access to tools, resources and opportunities.

Youth empowerment is...

When youth empowerment is respected, so many positive things can be accomplished and so much can be learned.

Discussion

Distribute **Handout 1, Definitions and Challenges** and pens/pencils. Read the definition of addiction aloud, or have a volunteer read it.

Post blank newsprint. Invite the youth to brainstorm other definitions of addiction. Ask the group to share examples of addiction, including some of the substances that are used/abused by youth. Record their contributions on newsprint.

Read the remaining information from Handout 1, or have volunteers take turns.

Then, ask:

- What are some reasons people use or abuse substances?
- What are some challenges your community has in relation to substance use/abuse?

Now, lead a discussion using these questions:

- What are your values and attitudes toward drug dependence (including alcohol) and other addictive behaviors?
- What are your family of origin values and attitudes toward drug dependence (including alcohol) and other addictive behaviors?

Invite the group to examine the role of their faith community with regard to youth who may be struggling with addiction. Ask:

- Does your faith community serve alcohol when children and youth are present?
- If yes, has your faith community considered a “no alcohol” policy for multigenerational events?

Distribute **Handout 2, InSide Out Groups**. Read and process the information on the handout. Explain that an adult advisor would convene and coordinate the InsideOut group, and youth often co-facilitate meetings.

Distribute **Handout 3, InSide Out Facilitator Guide**. Explain that the handout provides guidelines for what happens in an InSide Out group meeting, including sample questions for discussion. Stress that groups can choose their own topics for discussion.

Post blank newsprint. Discuss and note “Pros” and “Cons” of your faith community engaging in InSide Out groups. Then, plan the action steps that would be needed to begin one of these programs in your congregation, for members of your faith community, or for a wider group. As an action plan emerges, lead the group to consensus on committing to it. Assign roles, plan a next meeting, and exchange contact information among all participants who wish to continue on to the next steps.

Check-out and Closing

Have participants share one or two sentences about how they are feeling. Chaplains or ministers need to pay close attention to what participants share, and be ready to follow up as needed.

Distribute **Handout 4, Follow-Up Resources**.

Re-light the chalice, if needed. Offer closing words of your choosing, or these words:

*[God] Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can change,
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

Extinguish the chalice.