

“Taking Flight” FAQ

For Our Whole Lives Programs Interrupted by Covid-19

Your Questions, Answered – from “Taking Flight” Roundtable Webinars

ENDING A PROGRAM

- We want to close the class with some resolution, but we do not feel it is appropriate to have any in-depth conversation. We are looking to how to find a balance that would feel good for students and facilitators.

If you had workshops left but are choosing to eliminate them, please consider the content that will be missed and whether that will be made up with in-school programming or resources on [Amaze.org](https://www.amaze.org) or other resources on the curated list on the UUA website here <https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl. If you were already at the end of your program, see the ideas below.

- Can we do the final party online? That's all we had left.

Yes – As soon as you have the parents’ permission for their youth to attend, Party down! You might consider games that help connect the youth again (they may have great ideas) or something simple like a scavenger hunt (Show us something purple! Show us a fork! Find something that makes noise!). If funds allow, consider dropping off a small celebratory gift at each youth’s home, such as a Certificate of Completion and a card signed by the co-facilitators, or something else that represents they journey they’ve all been on. Be sure to request that all participants wear earbuds or headphones to others in the house aren’t privy to conversation among participants.

- Is it appropriate to ask my church staff for addresses of my participants so I can mail them their celebration gifts?

Please review your congregation’s privacy policy or email OWL parents to ask. They may prefer picking the gifts up outside your building. This article may be helpful: “Can You Get Coronavirus from Packages and Mail?” <https://bit.ly/2SNclo9>

ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN NOW AND WHEN YOU RE-START IN PERSON

- How do we keep participants engaged and connected between now and in-person restart?
- How do we integrate their hunger for connection with one another after all this time with the program content?

Quite a few groups are holding weekly social hours online, hosted by OWL co-facilitators. Participants can help suggest discussion topics or games – in-home scavenger hunts, virtual cards, etc. You’ll find guidance for hosting a virtual game night here:

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/host-virtual-game-night> You'll also find games playable on Zoom here: <https://www.elitedaily.com/p/6-games-you-can-play-on-zoom-for-long-distance-fun-22659780> We suggest you post the Group Covenant in the chat and remind participants that even these social gatherings will respect the OWL values. Check the listserv for ideas about submitting anonymous questions to be answered by facilitators. Decide on privacy parameters together and get parental permission for participation.

- Youth are “screened out.” How do we get them info when they are so inundated with distance everything?

Some children and youth will welcome occasional online gatherings; others will not. Keep things casual and flexible, perhaps starting with a brief check-in. Let the group decide how often and for how long to meet the next time. Explain that you won't be offering OWL online, but you can offer emotional support, camaraderie, and answers to their questions.

- What are setting and safety guidelines for continuing OWL classes? What could be the best way to setup breakout rooms within our groups?

Please see our guidelines re “When You Can't Do OWL-Do This!” This resource highlights how to offer adapted sexuality education using some OWL materials for grades 7-9, and some ideas for what to do with youth of other ages (updated quarterly in the OWL newsletter, which you can sign up for here: www.ucc.org/owl_signup. It's open to all and hosted by the UCC).

*All the standard guidelines for meeting online or in person apply, regardless of whether your group meets to socialize or attends program with OWL content. **Under NO circumstances** should the 7-9th grade Sexuality and Our Faith visuals be shown online.*

It's important to have two adults in any gathering of youth, including breakout rooms. If you have only two active OWL facilitators, each room could have one trained facilitator and one other trusted adult who is not an OWL parent.

We highly recommend that you follow your organization's Safe Congregation and Safe Church (or your secular organization's) policies. You can find UUA Youth Safety Guidelines, updated for COVID-19 times, here: <https://www.uua.org/youth/adults-ministry/safety-guidelines/online-guidance>

- How do we support our OWL facilitators when their work as leaders is left unfulfilled?

Facilitators can moderate online social gatherings as noted in the question above. They can also answer questions that may come up regarding sexuality and provide links to online hotlines, support groups, etc. Providing simple, accurate answers guided by the OWL values can help decrease anxiety and increase sexual health during this stressful time. Reassure the facilitators that answering questions is an important part of this

program and can be done in a thoughtful and sacred way during this time.

- How we can create an atmosphere where deep sharing and connection with an age demographic that may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with video conferencing?

This can be a challenge, even though many children and teens are used to school online now, and they may enjoy gaming, TikTok and other platforms that allow them to engage. Using video conferencing for socializing may be new for them. They may feel less comfortable having friends “in their home,” via a camera lens.

Video conferencing may be a challenge to adults of any age who don’t already use it for business, committee work, etc. Start with an email offering an introduction to the platform you’re using. The email should include very specific directions for how to log into your meeting space.

Once your participants are in the Zoom room, explain the features, such as the chat box, muting and unmuting their mics and cameras, gallery versus speaker view, and screensharing. Let them know which features will be controlled by the meeting host for security purposes. You may want to have a brief learning activity, discussion, or check-in that employs the features you’ve taught.

In the end, the sharing online may be less than it was in-person for some and more for others. It will depend on your group.

- How do we teach about safer sex in the time of COVID-19?

Answering questions is still something you can do. In addition, check out the resources we’ve provided in that include some reputable websites to recommend. If your region’s public health officials are continuing to recommend physical distancing, the safest sex will be enjoyed solo or with a partner with whom one is sheltering in place.

While offering the entire curriculum online is still not recommended, facilitators can check out our “When you can’t do OWL, do this!” document with recommendations for how to use some of the OWL content online.

Conversations, shared fun activities like games, virtual meals, watching movies via Netflix Party, and being outside while maintaining safe distances – these are just a few ways people can engage intimately without being sexual health risks. Masturbation is safe for all ages. Sexting may be safely and legally explored by consenting adults (do not recommend it to anyone under 18, for legal reasons).

Standard safer sex practices should be used by couples sheltering in place together and those who ignore distance guidelines. The virus has been identified in semen and feces and research is underway to learn whether it is sexually transmissible.

INGATHERING IN-PERSON AFTER A BREAK

We received many similar questions about regrouping in-person or online after programs were put on hiatus, so we’re bundling answers. If you had only completed a few workshops, your group may be best served by starting over, especially for the K-1 and 4-6 grades.

When it's safe to gather in person, flexibility will be key, since in-person programs may start and stop again, depending on public health recommendations. Communicate that with participants, along with your plan for keeping connected virtually during shut-downs.

Maintaining a lack of urgency is important: After the initial session(s) to reconnect and assess recall, you may make up some time in the Grades 7-9 and 10-12 programs by scheduling two workshops back-to-back. We do not recommend multiple sessions in one day for younger participants.

It may take one or two sessions (or two, back to back) to re-establish bonds. At the first session, play some warm-up games to help with name recall and getting reacquainted. Youth may have ideas for games, and you can also type "game" into the search bar at www.uua.org for games within several curricula in the Tapestry of Faith series.

Next, review the Group Covenant and see whether it still resonates or requires revision. Use an extended check-in to allow participants to share what they've been up to and where they are now. Facilitators might invite responses to the question, "Which three words would describe the past few months for you?" followed by, "What has helped you most during the time we spent apart, when you were worried, or lonely, or had other concerns?" If anyone seems to be struggling, the facilitators can offer to meet with them during a break or at the end of the workshop. Serious concerns about harm to self or others must be reported to the participant's parents, minister, or DRE/Christian Educator/program coordinator. Any concerns about possible victimization related to sexual or other types of abuse must be reported according to your state or province's mandatory reporting laws.

When participants are ready to move on, review the curriculum completed to date. You may choose to repeat activities; or you may ask questions based on each workshop's goals and learning objectives: "What are some things you remember about gender identity?" "What are some components of healthy relationships?" "What are some ways bystanders can help prevent bullying?" This will help assess whether to review some workshops more fully, or to move along to the content remaining in the curriculum.

This reconnecting and review may require one or two sessions. At that point, facilitators can determine the best path forward, in terms of repeating any workshops that weren't recalled during the review or scheduling the remaining workshops.

OWL and SOCIAL DISTANCING

- If we are able to teach OWL in the fall, with social distancing practices such as staying 6 feet apart, may we adapt the activities and continue to teach the class?

Please follow your local/regional health guidelines, your church and congregation guidelines, and the OWL value of Justice and Inclusivity. Consider whether any participant or facilitator (or someone in their households) are immunocompromised, as they would then need to be excluded from your program until the threat of COVID-19 passes.

Hypothetically, if everyone could attend, the 6' distance is the recommended minimum, with 9' offering greater protection.

Consider:

- *Is that realistic, with 10-15 youth and two facilitators in your space?*
- *Are masks required in your area? Using them may be mandatory and realistically will create challenges in terms of reading expressions and hearing each other.*
- *It's likely you will not provide snacks or beverages, which would require mask removal.*
- *These challenges might turn your well-intentioned program into a seated lecture and discussion class similar to an in-school program—the impact of which is that you are no longer offering an Our Whole Lives program.*

Please consider these things deeply and discern what is best for your group.

OWL ONLINE

We received many questions about offering Our Whole Lives online, so we're bundling answers.

The UUA and UCC national staff are exploring ways we can adapt certain parts of OWL online use.

*We also recommend against offering the entire OWL curriculum online; however, taking into account the scope and timeframe of the COVID-19 pandemic and the likely long-term prohibitions against in-person gatherings, we have adapted certain parts of OWL for Grades 7-9 for online use. Please see: *When you can't do OWL—do this!* This will not be "OWL as usual," since so many favorite activities require in-person interaction, and the usual workshops are too lengthy for children and youth already overburdened with screen time.*

Also, the OWL newsletter will begin to have suggestions for activities to do together with K-1 and Grades 4-6 participants. Anyone—facilitators, parents, etc—is welcome to sign up for the OWL newsletter here: www.ucc.org/owl_signup. The UCC is hosting the newsletter-and it is open to all.

Please also refer to the curated at-home resources here:

<https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl.

The reason we have adapted material to be used online "as is" is many fold:

- *The curricula weren't created for or tested for efficacy and engagement online.*
- *More importantly, potential for harm exists online. If a participant is triggered, facilitators may not notice and may not be able to offer effective support.*
- *Lack of privacy is a grave concern, as friends, parents, and siblings may be in the room, off or on camera.*
- *For youth and teen programs, parental permission is required, and that agreement can be broken if friends and siblings listen/view OWL workshops online.*

If you use the material online, please follow the recommendation for parental orientation

and written permission and agreement to guidelines you use.

In the meantime, please read the sections above for ideas about non-OWL virtual engagement and also refer to the curated at-home resources

<https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl

- Can we use the visuals online?

No, emphatically. *The Sexuality and Our Faith visuals for Grades 7-9 must not be shown online. They require the safety and privacy of an in-person OWL program with two trained facilitators and no chance that the images will be seen by younger siblings or friends, or they will be screen shot or recorded.*

LONG-TERM CONCERNS

Due to similar concerns expressed, we're bundling some answers here. We are in the process with you, working to discern options we can create and offer that uphold participants' safety and the integrity of the Our

Whole Lives material. We hope to have materials for your online use by winter, as well as the Grades K-1 field test materials. In the meantime, please refer to the Engagement section above and to the Resources posted in the Facilitator Resources areas of the UUA OWL webpages at <https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl.

We do not recommend using the OWL curriculum in person when social distancing is required. See the section on OWL and Social Distancing.

If you feel the need to discontinue the OWL Grades 7-9 program, you may want to repeat it when you can, rather than jumping into the 10-12 program, for which current 7th or 8th graders will be too young developmentally. Yes, you can combine 8th and 9th graders for the Grades 7-9 curriculum.

- How can we make sure this vital information gets to our kids if we can't re-open — especially if closure goes on through next fall?
- How can we complete the program year for OWL if social distancing continues into next program year?
- What if this distancing effort needs to last more than a year? Two years? Our 8th grade OWL class will be scheduled to start Coming of Age in the fall, and I don't know that we can ask them to also complete OWL. And how much will they have forgotten in the intervening time? Should we instead just concentrate on making sure we also have a thriving HS OWL class?
- Is it better to delay OWL a year, and in the 2021-2022 church year, do a combined 8th/9th grade session so it can be in person?
- For Gds. 7-9: It is likely that we may find ourselves home again for some part of the year in 2020-2021, and unable to complete the full number of class sessions. Will it be okay to adapt/ combine sessions?
- Ideas for maintaining the sense of community, trust, and some of the OWL momentum, especially if isolating stretches to the end of the summer or into the fall? -
- Given that the UUA/UCC have strongly advocated against online formats, and given the likelihood that social distancing/electronic gatherings will continue for the foreseeable future, what are your thoughts regarding OWL programs for the 2020-21 congregational year?

FACILITATOR TRAINING

- Will virtual OWL trainings be a possibility in 2020?

We do not foresee offering online trainings for new OWL facilitators any time soon, unfortunately. It will take time to assess whether and how we might recreate online the reflective nature of the experience, the peer facilitation

practice, personal stress management, and trainer assessment of each participant's ability to maintain boundaries, manage emotional triggers, and more.

We are adapting the current "Facilitator Approval Through Supervision" policy. Currently, people can only be supervised into approval within a level, i.e., if they were approved for K-1 many years ago (before levels were combined), they could be supervised by an approved facilitator for 4-6; thereby being approved for both levels. We have removed the limitation between levels so that someone approved to facilitate the Elementary level can be supervised into Secondary or Adult. This would be temporary, during the shut-down. The candidate would need to meet the following criteria before supervision could begin:

- o Be a trained and approved facilitator for any of the Elementary, Secondary or All-Adult levels.*
- o Be supervised by someone trained and approved for the new level (the UUA or UCC would verify status).*
- o The co-facilitation process must be overseen by a Director of Religious Education, Christian Educator, or other person in charge.*
- o The UCC or UUA must be notified of the supervision plan in advance so we can verify the supervisor's qualification to supervise.*
- o The candidate must view any archived webinars related to the curriculum levels in question.*
- o The candidate must attend a webinar we will offer in the fall, to cover areas outside the curriculum by necessary for effective facilitation.*
- o Prior to changing the candidate's status in our database, we would require confirmation from the supervisor and the team's supervisor (person overseeing the process) that the candidate is qualified.*

STARTING NEW OWL COHORTS OR PROGRAMS

- I am planning to start a middle school OWL program in the fall of 2020, which may be interrupted by a 2nd wave of the same pandemic. How can this be managed?

We recommend familiarizing yourself with the answers provided in the Engaging and the Ingathering sections of this document.

- What are the guidelines for having an OWL parent orientation or workshop via Zoom (or other remote group meeting application)? Thanks!

The UCC and UUA staff are exploring how this might be accomplished.

- We're planning to begin our program in the fall so any tips to help us should we need have to shelter in place during our program will be vital to us.

The suggestions provided for current programs that need to restart would apply to yours also. Alert the parents and participants of the plan to move to an online social gathering if it becomes necessary to take a hiatus.

PARENT SUPPORT

- How to address parent/care giver anxiety about children and youth whose OWL experience is hanging unfinished? How best to support parents and care givers as the primary sexuality educators of their children. How best to support youth in their development? Is it urgent for parents to have at-home resources to do some

of this education themselves, while puberty is happening?

We combined similar questions here and would suggest that while parents/caregivers are anxious for many reasons, a hiatus in the OWL program needn't be among them. Thanks to online resources like [Amaze.org](https://www.amaze.org) and the resources we've shared on the UUA website at <https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl, adults can continue in their role as their children's primary sexuality educators. These resources include information on puberty, and parents/caregivers can share from their own experiences with puberty as well. If they have specific questions about their child's physical or emotional development, they should contact a healthcare provider.

- Parents are asking where the class "left off" and for materials to "start having conversations" with their kids about the topics that were not yet covered. What approach would you recommend? Can we send handouts home for parents and youth to look at together?

Please refer parents to the resources list posted on the UUA website at <https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl. These resources will support parents as primary sexuality educators until your OWL program can reconvene. Handouts without context won't be particularly useful.

MISCELLANEOUS

- What if our teachers can't reschedule?

You might bring parents and facilitators to a virtual calendaring meeting to see if you can find a new day or time

that suits everyone's schedule. Another option is to explore a retreat-format program for any remaining workshops. This way the facilitators' investment of time would be shortened.

- Can 2nd graders be invited back to K/1 OWL when it's offered again (in fall 2020 or even later if we have to shelter in place again) or will they have aged out of the curriculum?

Welcome those children! There isn't a Grades 2-3 curriculum, so those children often enter the K-1 class. We do not recommend putting younger children into an older grade level OWL program.

- In the event that we do not resume in-person RE classes until September 2021 (which is a possibility that our congregation is considering) what might it look like to have a group who is "finishing 7/8 OWL" but consists of 9th and 10th graders?

The curriculum is designed for grades 7-9, so offering it to participants in grades 9-10 is fine.

They may be more socially mature, and the facilitators know how to use open-ended questions that will naturally reflect participants' life stage and high school experiences. We do not recommend combining participants from more than two concurrent grade levels, e.g. 7th graders and 9th graders or 8th graders and 10th graders.

- Resources: Is there a way to make some of the information available before shelter in place ends? Also: Are their online sex ed resources - videos, readings, books, etc - that OWL feels are appropriate to share with young people, or various age groups, that can be useful to them until in-person sessions can resume?

All OWL families should be able to review the curriculum (or purchase it,) if they wish, and you can send them the Parent Orientation handouts. Other than that, we do not recommend providing curriculum materials out of context.

You can support participants and families with the resources on the UUA website

at <https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl.

- "...if we end the classes, do we give a partial refund?

That decision is up to your individual congregation, but even virtual socializing may have expenses, e.g., you may want to purchase iPads or other equipment that will make virtual gatherings accessible to those who otherwise cannot afford an electronic device and Internet access.

- When will the new Grades 10-12 revised edition be ready? Will you consider releasing it electronically if it's not ready to print by fall?

Our production schedule got messed up when we needed to work on other projects related to helping congregations during this pandemic. We hope to publish the revised edition in early 2021. It will not be offered electronically and is not designed for online use.

- Help getting on the email forum?

Facilitators, DREs, Christian Educators, and other program organizers for UU and UCC programs are welcome to self-subscribe to the OWL Facilitator Email Lists for the levels they facilitate or coordinate: OWL-Child (K-1 and 4-6), OWL-L (7-9 and 10-12), and OWL-Adult (all 3 adult levels). <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo> Facilitators, Christian Educators, and other program organizers for UCC, Community (secular and other faiths), and UUA programs may join the UCC-moderated Yahoo group by contacting owl@ucc.org

- Can my co-facilitator participate? She is not a Religious Educator.

Yes, anyone involved in coordinating, supervising or facilitating an OWL program can participate in these roundtable discussions. If your question refers to someone being an OWL facilitator, we recommend that all facilitators attend a training before they implement the curriculum.

- When will K-1 field test be available?

The field test is ready to begin as soon as the previously-registered churches and congregations begin meeting in person again.

- How to address and a change in youth culture from social isolation regarding dating, etc. *OWL facilitators have been trained to reflect participant needs through open-ended discussion questions.*

- I'd like to know more about the possibility of incorporating additional video resources that are not part of the curriculum, but which could work within the limitations imposed by remote learning.

Please refer to the resources on the UUA website at <https://www.uua.org/re/owl/facilitators> and on the UCC OWL pages at www.ucc.org/owl, which include videos by Amaze.org, which align with OWL values. Beyond that, consider whether any videos you'd recommend would make sense, out of the context of an OWL program. An alternative could be to treat video resources as you would any movie shown "after-hours" at an OWL retreat. You could invite the group create a list of movies they'd like to view – perhaps on a platform like Netflix Party – and then run final choices by OWL parents, who must give permission for any non-OWL materials. Only use this option if all program participants have access to the platform you plan to use.