



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester Religious Exploration

CODE OF ETHICS

for Persons Working with Children and Youth in UUA Sponsored Programs

The Role of Adult Leaders

Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role--one that may carry with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as youth advisor, chaperone, child-care worker, teacher, minister, participant at a youth-adult conference or in any other role, the adult has a special opportunity: to interact with young people in ways that are affirming and inspiring to the young people and to the adult. Adults can be mentors to, role models for, and trusted friends of children and youth. To help our children grow up to be caring and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lasting gift to the young person.

While it is important that adults be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and youth and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with adults and may find it difficult to speak out about the inappropriate behavior of adults.

Adult leaders need to possess a special dedication to working with young people in ways that affirm the UUA Principles. Good communication skills, self-awareness and understanding of others, sensitivity, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and a positive attitude are all important attributes. In addition, it is desirable for adult leaders to be persons who: 1) have a social network outside of their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation and self-esteem; and 2) are willing and able to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation requiring expert help or intervention.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire religious community, not just those in leadership positions, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth. With the aforementioned in mind, the following statement is submitted as a "Code of Ethics" for adults working with children and youth.

Code of Ethics

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well-qualified to provide the special nurturing, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized.

Self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being are two crucial components of development. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore, leaders must refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with children or youth which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read and understand this code,

Signed _____ Date _____

Print Name _____