

Oak Park Our Whole Lives 7th - 9th grade Curriculum

The OP-OWL 7th - 9th grade curriculum consists of 12 workshops on a variety of subjects. Each workshop begins with a "re-entry" in which youth are asked to reflect on ways in which the topic might be relevant to their lives, now or in future; a reading; and answering the previous week's "Question Box" questions. Each workshop ends with all students contributing to the "Question Box" - a system that allows them to ask questions anonymously.

The book *S.E.X.: The All-You Need-to-Know Sexuality Guide to Get You Through Your Teens and Twenties*, 2nd ed. by Heather Corinna is given to all participants and used as a reference for many questions and topics.

Session 1: Introductions and Sexual Language

In the first session, youth meet the facilitators and one another. The group creates a "pact" of rules for respectful interaction and gets oriented to the structure of the program. They do group activities designed to orient them and to engage participants in a discussion about the Circles of Sexuality, the "Our Whole Lives Values", and identifying their own personal values. Participants discuss the different types of language people use for sexual anatomy and acts - medical language, common language, child language, and street language.

Session 2: Gender Roles and Stereotypes

This session engages youth in discussions of societal messages around the performance of masculinity and femininity and they discuss the effects that can be a result of gender roles and stereotypes.

Session 3: Body Images, Media and the Internet

In this session, participants discuss positive and negative body images, media messages about body image, and how body image might affect sexual decision-making. In this workshop they explore ways to tell if digital resources are reliable information sources, and to talk about the ramifications of using the internet for social or sexual purposes.

Session 4: Anatomy and Sex & Disability

This workshop checks and expands participants' knowledge about sexual anatomy and physiology. Participants gain an understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities as sexual beings; the workshop is intended to affirm participants with and without disabilities. Youth discuss definitions of disability, talk about disability in the context of sexual decision-making, and engage in an activity designed to build understanding of the effects of stereotyping and discrimination.

Session 5: Personal Concerns about Puberty

This is the only workshop that splits youth out by their biological sex. At the beginning, they engage in a whole group activity called "Am I Normal" in which they discuss concerns *other people* might have about their bodies. Then they split into groups by biological sex to discuss questions about puberty. Both groups can ask questions about any sex or topic.

Session 6: Sexual Orientation, Expression, and Identity

In this session, youth discuss homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism (also called heterocentrism or heteronormativity). They discuss core OWL beliefs about sexual orientation, discuss common myths and misperceptions, and engage in brainstorming around how people can effectively be allies to LGBTQ youth. Participants are introduced to the "S-I-E-O" model, which breaks gender and sexual identity out into Sex, Identity, Expression, and Orientation. They discuss how gender and sexuality interact, and how to handle hypothetical questions about gender identity.

- **Guest Panel from Community**

This workshop includes a guest panel of people from the community with non-cisgender identities and/or non-heterosexual orientations.

Session 7: Healthy Relationships

In this session, through a brainstorming activity about things that might be "deal-makers" and "deal-breakers" in different kinds of relationships (friendships, romance, lifelong partnership), youth come to an understanding of what is essential to healthy relationships. They engage in a letter-writing activity and an exercise designed to help them gain understanding of the role of power and equality in relationships

Session 8: Relationship Skills

This workshop is focused on listening, being assertive, and refusal skills.

- **Communication and Boundaries**

Participants discuss and enforce their own boundaries, work on active listening, and effective communication. They engage in role-plays that develop refusal skills and model/identify the difference between assertive, passive, and aggressive communication.

- **Bystander Responsibilities and Ally Strategies**

Participants define and discuss bullying and how it can play out around various aspects of the S-I-E-O model of identity. They explore bullying scenarios and think about what bystanders can and should do to stop or minimize the bullying. Bystander intervention training materials from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center may be used to supplement the OWL materials for this unit.

Session 9: The Why and How

- **Lovemaking**

In this session, the group will brainstorm and discuss both positive and negative consequences of sexual behavior and think about examples of

"healthy" and "unhealthy" sexual relationships (based on the definition included in the OWL values), as well as a Q&A session or a "lovemaking in music" lyrics analysis activity.

- **Consent Education**

The differences between consent, coercion, harassment, and assault (including rape) are a focus of this workshop. Participants will discuss verbal and non-verbal signals of consent and non-consent.

Session 10: STI prevention, Contraception, Safe Sex

- **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

This session covers information about the symptoms, transmission, prevention, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) using fun group activities.

- **Contraception and Safer Sex**

Activities for this workshop are designed to provide information about the relative risks and effectiveness of various forms of birth control in a fun and interesting way. A variety of barrier and non-barrier contraception methods will be discussed and the relative effectiveness of each method at preventing pregnancy and STI's.

A guest speaker who works in reproductive health may be invited to present at this workshop.

Session 11: Pregnancy, Parenting, and unintended Pregnancy Options

- **Pregnancy, Parenting, and Teenage Parenthood**

In this session, participants engage in an exercise designed to help them identify and prioritize qualities of good parents and discuss the challenges of parenting while young. They reflect on their own personal life goals and create a timeline of their imagined futures.

- **Unintended Pregnancy Options**

Starting from the premise that preventing unintended pregnancy is the best option, this workshop addresses options for addressing unintended pregnancy. Youth will discuss their attitudes toward various options and explore personal decision-making processes. Participants will discuss ways to support and communicate with friends and partners as well as personal choices.

Session 12: Sexual Decision-Making

Previous discussions about boundaries, types of sexual contact, and healthy relationships come together in this session. Participants use scenarios, personal reflection, and role-playing to examine and discuss decision-making, communication, and sexual decision-making.

- **Refining Abstinence (Othercourse)**

This workshop discusses the spectrum of sexual and intimate behavior, and discussions about the risks and benefits of intercourse, "outercourse" (sexual/sensual exploration without penetration or fluid exchange), and masturbation.

- **Communicating with a Sexual Partner**
Roleplay activities allow participants to practice their active listening and assertiveness skills to practice communication with a sexual partner. Youth practice initiating conversations about sexual behavior and responding to objections to a "bottom line" statement.
- **Self-Care, Celebration, and Closure**
This final workshop is a final summation of what the youth have learned. An activity included is about how to encourage self-care through the interconnectedness of sexuality and other aspects of health. The group talks about how to find good resources (online and otherwise) to address questions or situations that may come up for them or for their peers, and participants complete a program evaluation. There is usually cake!