

# Our Whole Lives 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades

## **CURRICULUM GOALS**

The overall goal of *Our Whole Lives* lifespan sexuality education is to create a positive and comprehensive lifespan educational program that helps participants of all ages to gain the knowledge, values, and skills to lead sexually healthy, responsible lives. More specifically, this curriculum is designed to help young adolescents

- Affirm and respect themselves as sexual persons (including their bodies, sexual orientation, feelings, etc.) and respect the sexuality of others
- Increase comfort and skills for discussing and negotiating sexuality issues with peers, romantic partners, and people of other generations
- Explore, develop, and articulate values, attitudes, and feelings about their own sexuality and the sexuality of others
- Identify and live according to their values
- Increase motivation and skills for developing a just sexual morality that rejects double standards, stereotypes, biases, exploitation, dishonesty, and harassment
- Acquire knowledge and skills for developing and maintaining romantic or sexual relationships that are consensual, mutually pleasurable, non-exploitative, safe, and based on respect, mutual expectations, and caring
- Increase knowledge and skills for avoiding unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections
- Express and enjoy sexuality in healthy and responsible ways at each stage of their development
- Assess the impact of messages from family, culture, religion, media, and society on sexual thoughts, feelings, values, and behaviors

## **PROGRAM ASSUMPTIONS**

*Our Whole Lives* is based on a set of assumptions about the rights of young people. We believe that they have the right to

- Ask any question they have about sexuality
- Receive complete information about sexuality
- Explore any issues of sexuality that interest them
- Have support in making their own decisions about sexual matters
- Express their sexuality in ways that are healthy and life affirming
- Be treated with respect by leaders and participants in this group

This curriculum is also based on the following assumptions about human sexuality:

- All persons are sexual.
- Sexuality is a good part of the human experience.

## Our Whole Lives 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades

- Sexuality includes much more than sexual behavior.
- Human beings are sexual from the time they are born until the time they die.
- It is natural to express sexual feelings in a variety of ways.
- People engage in healthy sexual behavior for a variety of reasons, including to express caring and love, to experience intimacy and connection with another, to share pleasure, to bring new life into the world, and to experience fun and relax.
- Sexuality in our society is damaged by violence, exploitation, alienation, dishonesty, abuse of power, and the treatment of people as objects.
- It is healthier for young teens to postpone sexual intercourse.

### PROGRAM VALUES

While *Our Whole Lives* is designed to be relevant for young people from a wide range of family backgrounds and religious traditions, it is not values-free. The program gives clear messages about key sexuality issues. These issues are organized into four broad topic areas – self-worth, sexual health, responsibility, and justice and inclusivity.

#### *Self-Worth*

Every person is entitled to dignity and self-worth and to his or her own attitudes and beliefs about sexuality.

#### *Sexual Health*

Knowledge about human sexuality is helpful, not harmful. Every person has the right to accurate information about sexuality and to have their questions answered.

Healthy sexual relationships are

- consensual (partners agree about what they will do together sexually)
- non-exploitative (partners have equal power, and neither pressures or forces the other into activities or behaviors)
- mutually pleasurable (both receive pleasure)
- safe (sexual activity brings no or low risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, or emotional pain)
- developmentally appropriate (sexual activity is appropriate to the age and maturity of persons involved)
- based on mutual expectations and caring; and
- respectful (partners value honesty and keeping commitments made to others)

Sexual intercourse is only one of the many valid ways of expressing sexual feelings with a partner. It is healthier for young adolescents to postpone sexual intercourse.

#### *Responsibility*

We are called to enrich our lives by expressing sexuality in ways that enhance human wholeness and fulfillment and that express love, commitment, delight, and pleasure.

## Our Whole Lives 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades

All persons have the right and obligation to make responsible sexual choices.

### *Justice and Inclusivity*

We need to avoid double standards. People of all ages, sexual identities, races, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds, income levels, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations must be equally valued and have equal rights.

Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative.

All of the following are natural in the range of human experience: being romantically and sexually attracted to more than one gender (bisexual), the same gender (homosexual), another gender (heterosexual), and/or to those with a more fluid understanding of their own and others' gender (pansexual), and not experiencing sexual attraction (asexual).

## **CONTENT**

### UNIT ONE Introduction

This unit is designed to create a safe and comfortable environment, give an overview of the program, introduce the Circles of Sexuality and provide a broad definition of sexuality, explore values and opinions about a range of sexuality issues, and increase comfort with sexual language.

### UNIT TWO You as a Sexual Being

This unit helps participants explore many aspects of themselves as sexual beings: their bodies, puberty changes, gender identity, the impact of societal gender roles, gender expression, sexual orientation, and disability. (DVD – anatomy segment)

### UNIT THREE Relationships

This unit identifies the characteristics of healthy relationships and important skills, such as active listening and assertiveness, which help individuals develop and maintain healthy relationships. These workshops use role-playing to help participants practice skills and get feedback to improve those skills.

### UNIT FOUR Contemporary Issues

This unit explores two issues that present significant sexual dilemmas for today's teens: social media/the Internet and bullying.

### UNIT FIVE Responsible Sexual Behavior

First, this unit offers a broad definition of abstinence that excludes risky behavior – oral, anal, and vaginal sexual intercourse – but allows for no- or very low-risk sexual behaviors such as masturbation and outercourse. Second, it presents honest information about lovemaking within the context of healthy relationships, negating popular media messages that portray sexual behaviors in

## Our Whole Lives 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades

casual, unsafe, and often exploitative contexts. Last, it defines what it means for sexual relationships to be consensual and gives participants practice in seeking consent from a partner. (DVD – lovemaking and masturbation segments)

### UNIT SIX Sexually Transmitted Infections, Pregnancy, and Parenting

This unit presents facts about the transmission and prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It also provides information about conception, pregnancy, and birth, as well as the realities of teen parenting. It explores options for resolving an unintended pregnancy, and covers contraception and safer sex practices.

### UNIT SEVEN Communicating about Sexuality

This unit focuses on making decisions about sexual behavior, helping youth figure out their bottom-line values when it comes to sexual behavior at this point in their lives. Further, it helps them develop the skills to communicate those values to a partner and to resist pressures to reverse their decisions. It also asks participants to make connections between general health and sexual health and to celebrate and close the program.