



RETREAT EXTRAS

It is important to do everything possible to make the retreat experience meaningful and memorable. Your group members are expecting that the retreat will be a departure from the norm - something extraordinary. It doesn't take an unlimited budget to make this happen. Take a look at some of these creative ideas:

GROUP MEMBER SURPRISE:

Other than a snack, have group members bring something to share. This might be a song, a custom, a skit, an item for share and tell. Periodically, have someone share their surprise. This will involve everyone at the retreat and bring spontaneous fun to the mix.

RETREAT MOMENTO:

Provide a memento of the retreat. Take a group photo, puff paint an object, tie dye a t-shirt, distribute special folders, make buttons for each member, create a video tape of the memories from the retreat. Giving everyone something to take with them will provide a long lasting reminder of the great experience they had.

PUT IT IN WRITING:

It is important to provide all of the information from the retreat in writing. If you have information pertinent to sessions, give it to your members in advance. Have someone take thorough notes during the retreat and distribute those after the retreat. Invest in 3 ring binders or pocket folders to provide a home for all notes and information.

MUSIC

Be sure to have music at your retreat. Ask group members to bring their favorite CD's and play music during breaks, when people are working in small groups or on individual projects. Music is a powerful tool that brings life and energy into the environment

MAILBOXES:

Bring shoe boxes or large envelopes and create a communication system for your members. Encourage them to use the mailboxes to leave notes for each other. Build in periodic breaks for the group to put words of encouragement or support for one another in mailboxes.

SURPRISE:

Be sure to build in a fun surprise for your group. Ideas include: bowling, ice cream sundaes, puppet show by returners, games - win lose or draw, bonfire, etc. Disguise a session on the agenda or suspend the agenda and go for the surprise. You will enjoy the results!

EVALUATION:

Be sure to facilitate an evaluation of the retreat. In the middle of the retreat, ask group members to each share 3 words that describe how they are feeling. Be sure to have a discussion to process the words that are shared. You may also choose to have the group write the words on paper before a break - so that you can read them and evaluate the group climate. In addition, be sure to include an evaluation in the folder or binder that is given to group members.