



EVALUATION & FOLLOW-UP

As with any program, evaluation and follow-up are key elements in successful retreat execution. Evaluation should take place throughout the retreat and upon completion of the experience. Gaining insight during the retreat will give you important information that can be used to re-vamp the plan or continue with things that are going well. When people are involved in an intensive group experience, emotions and feelings can cause conflict and misunderstanding. Using some on-going evaluation techniques will help you continually shape the retreat into a positive experience for everyone (or most everyone). Some creative methods for conducting a pulse check during the retreat are as follows:

A Picture is Worth 1000 Words:

Put up a large piece of banner paper and ask everyone to draw a picture that represents how they are feeling about the group or about the retreat. Review the pictorial evaluation as a group and hold a group discussion to delve further into the evaluative process.

Focus Group:

Pull together some of your key leaders, retreat coordinators, or returning members and spend 10 minutes asking for some verbal feedback about how the group is feeling. You will be surprised at some of the suggestions and feedback you will receive.

Suggestion Box:

Create a suggestion box or envelope that will encourage anonymous feedback from group members. Check the information periodically (remind your members to utilize this resource via a suggestion break) and make changes accordingly.

Weather Check:

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.

Comprehensive Evaluation:

Create a comprehensive evaluation tool that can be filled out at the end of the retreat. Be sure to leave time for this during the retreat experience. If it is not done during the retreat, you will miss out on initial emotions and details that are critical to a realistic assessment.