

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 3

February 2008

Young People



This youth edition for 12 – 18 year olds comes out three times a year and seeks to offer activities for one-off sessions or weekends. This is offered with the intention of providing an opportunity for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of partnership in our shared journey in the spirit. Included are **getting ready**, for those coordinating the programme; **gather**, meeting, centering, focusing; **engage**, beginning to think about the theme; **respond**, activities linked to the theme; **reflect**, ending appropriately; and **review**, evaluating what has happened. Some of the activities are included on additional sheets. Timings are not stated as this will depend on the group and how the activities are used.

The underpinning theology is that there are four directions to our spiritual journey. Inwards to ourselves; outwards to others; upwards towards the deeper mystery; downwards to the world we live in. "Journeys in the Spirit" offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people with the intention of enabling our spiritual journeys to progress.



Offering a range of ideas to use with young people in a Quaker context at a weekend or a series of sessions. This youth edition for 12 – 18 year olds comes out three times a year.

Relationships, Sex and Sexuality

Getting ready

Preparing Hearts & Minds

Relationships and sex is a topic that touches us all at depth. Friends have been known for the liberalising moves of *Towards a Quaker view of sex*, and are now recognised by many as a welcoming place for people of different sexual or gender identity. But despite Friends' occasional boldness in public, there does seem to have been a reticence to offer a Quakerly space for young people to talk about their relationships and sexuality. From work done by the Quaker Youth Forum of 2002-3 it has been clear that this is important to young Friends. A sub-group of Quaker Life Children and Young People's Committee was formed to keep this subject on the agenda. We've sought to build on the Youth Forum's work and have involved young Friends in our process. This edition of *Journeys* is one of the fruits of our work.

We are aware that this can seem a daunting subject but want to encourage Friends to "live adventurously" and not shy away. We'd suggest the following to help you prepare: Consider a venue that is not shared with other groups. Ensure you have a clear procedure to follow if abuse is disclosed. Consider the age range of your group and choose activities with this in mind. Consider outlining your plans to parents and gaining their consent. Be aware of the words you use, be careful not to offend but try to use language that young people can relate to. Think about your own boundaries if you're facilitating – what you might be prepared to share or to hear – and what values you hold. Might it help to invite speakers with specific experiences, e.g. gay or trans-gendered Friends?

We found it helpful to engage with Quaker writings and materials on relationships and sexuality, and also to draw on the many resources available from other organisations of all kinds. Lastly but importantly: have confidence in young Friends' ability to engage maturely and in depth with this topic.

Equipment needed: flipchart paper, pens, A3 paper, post-its, snakes and ladders shapes, blue-tack, counters, dice, card, blank postcards, copies of sets of statement cards, old newspapers and magazines, scissors, glue.

Underpinning references

"God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them"
(1 John 4:16)

The Bible
Genesis chapters 1-2;
Song of Songs;
1 John 3:18, 4:7-8, 12, 16

Advices and Queries:
21-23 and 25

Quaker Faith &
Practice: Chapter 22

Gather

Start with a period of quiet to settle and centre. After the time of quiet, introduce an ice-breaker exercise. After a go-round of names (if necessary), the facilitator starts by saying a word or phrase relating to the topic, e.g. “relationship”, “friendship”. The next person then says a word that comes into their head in connection with the topic. The next person in the circle says another word - either linked to the first word, or that from the person next to them. This continues as many times around the circle as you wish. Ask the group to bear these words in mind throughout the sessions.

Creating the right atmosphere

Ask the group to create a “working agreement”. What would help *the group* to work effectively together, creating a safe environment where everyone feels able to participate as much as they would like to, and to share ideas and experiences? A volunteer from the group should write the words or phrases the group suggest on a sheet of flipchart paper. It should include “confidentiality” - if this doesn't come up naturally, find a way of introducing it. Explore what is meant by ‘confidentiality’ and the other words that are offered. Maybe ask each member of the group to sign the sheet with the words written on as a way of individuals indicating their acceptance of the agreement.

Engage

Preconceptions

In small groups (2-3), ask people to scribble down the first words, thoughts or feelings that come to mind when they hear “Quakers and sexuality” or “Quakers and sex”. After a few minutes, ask them to feed back to the whole group. This is just a quick brainstorm of first reactions and the messages we've received. Perhaps create a graffiti wall with all these words written on it.

Relationships Spidergram

This activity introduces the theme by exploring the individual's family, friendships and relationships and how these link together. Give everyone a sheet of A3 paper and some pens and ask them to draw a spidergram or web representing them / their friendships / their relationships indicating also how they are interlinked.

They should start by writing or drawing themselves (“me”) in the centre of the paper and think of the people or groups of people who are important to them and join these up to “me”. Examples are school friends, family, work friends, Quaker friends etc. They should then draw lines linking them up (where those groups meet or overlap), e.g. drawing solid or dotted lines to represent stronger or weaker links. It may be helpful to draw an example on the flipchart as you explain it, to show how the spidergram could develop.

When people have finished, ask them to pair up with someone and explain to each other their spidergram. Emphasise that they need only share what they feel comfortable with.

Exploring expectations around sexuality

In small groups (5 - 6) explore expectations of sexuality and relationships in different contexts: for example, school / college, home, within Quakers, in the media.

- Do you feel you ‘ought’ to have a boyfriend/ girlfriend?
- What are the peer pressures around relationships?
- What about family expectations?
- What, if any, are the differences between the contexts the group talks about?

It may be helpful to let the conversation flow rather than asking anyone to record what is said.

References & other resources

The following could be used as readings in worship:

Quaker Faith and Practice
22.02, 22.11,
22.33, 22.42,
22.47

Who do we think we are?

J3 page 96 (see reference below)

Quaker Books

All the books listed below are currently available for borrow from the Quaker Life resources room
www.quaker.org.uk/cat

Towards a Quaker view of sex (An essay by a group of Friends, 1964)

Who do we think we are? Young Friends
Commitment and Belonging (1998) by YFGM for a Swarthmore Lecture

Committed Relationships
Volume 6 of the Eldership and Oversight series published 2001

This we can say (talking honestly about sex), Nine Friends Press, 1995

Respond

Emotions and relationships

This activity explores the way emotions can affect relationships. It is divided into three parts: brainstorming different types of emotions; playing a game and reflection. People should be in groups of four. Each group needs: flipchart paper and pens, a square board showing numbers 1 to 100 (drawn on a large piece of paper is fine), blank snakes and ladders shapes of varying sizes, blue-tack, counters and dice.

Brainstorming: Ask the group to name emotions (e.g. anger/fear) and write on flipchart. Consider which are positive and which are negative. Ask 'do these emotions apply equally to whether it involves family, friends or partner?'

Snakes and ladders game: Ask the group to consider what emotions help in relationships and what hinders them. Write or illustrate the emotional 'helps' on ladders, and the 'hinders' onto snakes. Aim for 12-14 snakes and ladders altogether. Stick ladders and snakes onto the board, so that ladders carry you up from a lower to a higher number, and snakes take you down head to tail. Choose a counter each and proceed following the normal rules for snakes and ladders. As each snake or ladder is used the person who made it may talk of their experience, and the one who travels on it may give their reaction or experience.

After the game ask the group to share what they have learned from one another's experience of emotional highs and lows.

Relationships and the Quaker testimonies

In small groups, explore how each of the Quaker testimonies (truth, simplicity, equality and peace) interact and impact on our relationships and friendships. *(There is a Youth Journeys in the Spirit on the theme of the testimonies that would be useful to look at for an exploration on the testimonies, this as available through www.quaker.org.uk/cyp select 'Resources' on the left hand menu, then 'Archive' also on the left hand menu and then click on Journeys in the Spirit Youth Edition 1).*

- How do these values help us in our relationships (or friendships)?
- How do they challenge us in our relationships (or friendships)?

Explore each testimony in turn or choose one to examine in more depth. People may like to share examples of times that their Quaker values had an impact on their relationships.

Boundaries game

Divide participants into small groups of no more than five. Each group needs: statements on cards (*provided on additional sheet A*), a large sheet of paper with a circle drawn on with a central area marked 'acceptable' and an outer area marked 'unacceptable'.

The group sits around their large piece of paper and divides the phrases evenly (without reading them) between all the group members. Working independently and in silence, each member of the group reads their phrases and places them on the large piece of paper to indicate the statement as 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable' in relationships. When all the statements have been placed, all members of the group look at them without comment and (still in silence) turn over any statements which they would have placed differently. As a group, now discuss those statements which have been turned over. Agreement may or may not be reached as to where each should be placed.

Afterwards, ask participants to get into pairs and discuss what their own personal values and boundaries are in relationships (or friendships). They may like to write these on a card or draw their own personal boundaries shield.

Additional Activities

See sheets B & C for an activity exploring fidelity and relationships

See sheet D for an activity exploring masculinity and femininity

See sheet D, E and F for an activity exploring different moral views of sex

Other resources

Let's Talk Relationships, a handbook of activities for young people. Available through the NYA www.nya.org.uk

The Teen Relationship workbook and the Teen Relationship Building Skills card game. Available through Incentive-Plus www.incentiveplus.co.uk

Sexual Senses, a set of posters to promote discussion and offer information. Available through UK Youth www.ukyouth.org/resources

Reflect

The following exercise is reflective and worshipful in nature. It should be done in silence and leads into a period of worship.

Ask the group to sit in a circle and give each person a piece of card in the shape of a heart, or a postcard. Ask people to reflect on the things they have thought about and done during the session. On their own, ask them to answer the question you have chosen from the list below on their card / heart. They may use doodles, pictures or words.

Say that this is personally for them to take away with them, but they are also welcome to share their reflections in the silence.

Choose one of the following:

- What are the (Quaker) principles that guide you and your relationships?
- What are the values that you want future relationships to work by?
- What is your one dream or wish for the future, regarding you and your relationships?
- What have you discovered / learnt about yourself during the session?

Review

For adults to consider after the session:

- Did everyone get the opportunity to speak and be listened to?
- Did everyone get the opportunity to listen to others?
- Did everyone have the opportunity to reflect?

How did the activities encourage young people to ...

- Think about themselves and their friendships and relationships?
- Reflect on Quaker values in their friendships and relationships?
- Think about what is important to them in their friendships and relationships?

Links to other organisations and resources

Connexions: info & advice for young people www.connexions-direct.com

FPA: resources for talking to young people about sex: www.fpa.org.uk

LGBT Youth: www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

One Life: BBC health and relationships information www.bbc.co.uk/onelife/

Youth Work magazine: a monthly publication: www.youthwork.co.uk

RHP: resources for working with young people: www.russellhouse.co.uk

The Leaveners: Quaker arts and drama: www.leaveners.org

A website for young Quakers: www.yospace.org

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Edited by Howard Nurden.

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Contact: Bevelie Shember, CYP Work Office, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Phone 020 7663 1013

Email bevelies@quaker.org.uk Website: www.quaker.org.uk

Ideas for the whole meeting

Work with a group of young people to devise a session for the whole meeting, maybe after a shared lunch, on the theme of Quaker values and relationships. Which of the activities that they have done do they think might be effective with the whole meeting?

Links

www.ruthinking.co.uk

www.likeitis.org.uk

Websites designed for young people to make sure you know and understand the emotional and physical aspects of sex, and what the risks are.

The next Youth Journeys in the Spirit comes out on May 1st 2008.

This will be entitled 'Raising the Creative Spirit' and will be written by The Leaveners, a Quaker arts organisation for young people. This will offer a range of creative art and drama activities that aim to enable spiritual development.