



— Experience differences

SPiMBÉR

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Experience differences

SPiMER

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Preamble

“SPI” Activities

“SPI”, as in “spirituality” or “spiritual development”.

Frightening words? No, words that give food for thought and a choice in personal values.

It is your challenge to organise a SPI activity, in your group, your local programme council, your regional meeting...

Through the pages of this “spiritual handbook” you will find a lot of information, references and activities to organise with your group.

Just go for it! All local and regional leaders are capable of organising a SPI activity.

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- Why should we talk about spirituality in Scouting?
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- So, how can we do it?
- How to use this tool?

« Preparation » sheets

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- A few activities to “warm up” and to be ready to reflect on oneself.

« SPI activity » sheets

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- See the below table

Texts and quotations

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Religions and beliefs

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Spiritual development

Introduction

Spiritual development - what exactly does it mean?

The **spirituality** of human beings (from the latin word *spiritus*, mind), is everything that relates to their beliefs, value system and emotions.

Developing our spirituality means enriching the relations that we experience as an individual:

- The relation to ourselves (learn to know ourselves better),
- The relation to others (Learn to accept the existence of others and discover the people that we meet),
- The relation to the world, the universe (explore the various beliefs, customs, philosophies or religions to create our own representation of the world).

As a leader, to aid the spiritual development of young people is to offer them the chance to begin the search of themselves through the building of a personal value system, beliefs and deep convictions. The aim is to bring them closer and closer to their own truth.

On the other hand, one can only know oneself through the confrontation with others and through differences. The *group dimension* is therefore essential to the spiritual development.

However, spiritual development is a personal process. We, leaders, can only guide and support young people in their own development. Our role is not to pass on a philosophy, religion or belief, but to allow each person to live, express and share the truth that they have chosen¹.

Why should we talk about spirituality in Scouting?

As a founder member of World Scouting and Guiding, the Belgian Pluralist Scouts base their educational action on six fundamental pillars of youth development:

- Physical development,
- Intellectual development,
- Emotional and affective development,
- Social development,
- Spiritual development,
- Personality development.

Spiritual development has in fact always been an integral part of our educational programme.

¹ This is of course based on the principle that the model chosen by the young person respects the democratic principles and foundations of our movement.

However, many have thought for a long time that a pluralistic federation should be neutral. People saw us as reluctant to the idea of talking about philosophy and spirituality in the context of our scouting... As if it was taboo! As a result, some people for whom this spiritual dimension was important did not find their place within our movement.

Today, and like always before, at SGP, we aim at much more than the passive coexistence of young people within more or less homogeneous groups. It is actually an active Pluralism which we would like to practise together; a pluralism where each of us would have the ambition to meet others and their differences, where every individual would benefit from some space to express their ideas, share their convictions and live their customs.

Idealistic? Maybe to a certain extend... But in an increasingly multicultural society, isn't it an idea that deserves giving it a go, even a little bit?

Spirituality, an every day matter ...

You probably experience spiritual moments every weekend without even knowing it! The occasions are plentiful if we work on the principle that spiritual development happens through the expression and exchange of values, emotions, etc...

"I hate Stephanie!": Inviting a cub scout to think about the meaning of love and hate is already a form a spirituality. Discussing the concept of life and death with beavers is also about spirituality.

You have now understood that spirituality does not necessarily mean pompous ceremonies, long speeches and boring bla bla... (And this should not only apply to the summer camp.)

So, how can we do it?

Intimate beliefs, values and emotions...How can we encourage our young people to express themselves on topics which are sometimes so personal? The first step is to create **an atmosphere of respect and attention** within the group. Learning these qualities is not an obvious thing. It is important to devote enough time to it in order for each person to express themselves with confidence.

Secondly, we should remind ourselves that it is not a **scout leader's** responsibility to take on the role of parents, psychologist, religious or secular counsellor. It is indeed not a matter of starting a collective therapy or re-creating the spiritual education of our children! Our only objective is to enable young people to reflect on themselves and share their thoughts with others.

Our role is basically to allow for these exchanges to happen in the best possible conditions. We'll also be responsible for developing each person's point of view by opening new reflection trails or by making young people aware of the various existing references that are available to them.

Do not worry, the leader does not need to be a professional in philosophy! He does not need to know or have an answer for everything, as there is no such thing as absolute truth in spirituality.

The group should be made aware of this as the leader often represents a model of intelligence and knowledge for the younger ones. A leader should therefore avoid



influencing young people by voicing their opinion too quickly. But beware! Running away from the questions of a group is not a solution either.

Be available, stimulate curiosity, encourage listening and expression, be capable of questioning the meaning that we attribute to things and life: Those are the attitudes that any leaders could adopt.

It is therefore interesting to come off the beaten track and to vary the type of activities. There are thousands of funny things to do with young people within the context of spirituality. This tool was created to make your task easier.

Remember that spiritual development is never over for anybody. So do not hesitate to approach and meet other leaders to enrich your own spiritual life!

How to use this tool?

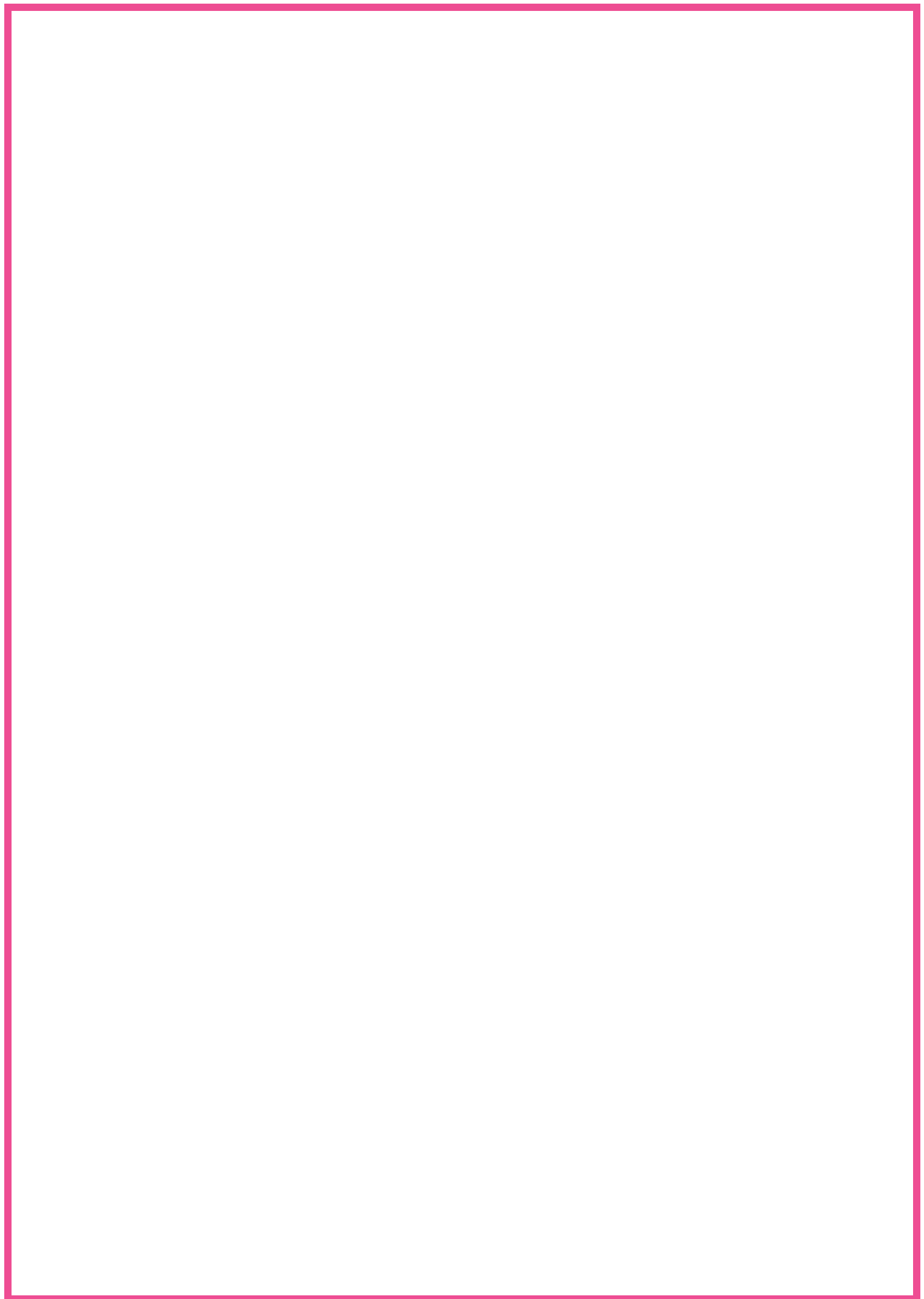
This tool includes "**activity sheets**" focusing on the spiritual development of the child and the adolescent as well as "preparation sheets", designed to create the necessary conditions for a respectful and attentive group atmosphere (i.e. these can be used before a discussion about the experience and values of everyone). It is up to you to complete these sheets, adapt them, and rework them according to your wishes and needs.

One can easily fall into the trap of transforming spiritual development into a "one fits all" concept. For example, discussing pollution or the importance of recycling is more a matter of education to citizenship than spiritual development. In the same way, organising activities around the observation of nature is related to the outdoors and not spirituality. In this tool, we have specified the main objectives of each activity to show its place within the spiritual development context. This will also allow you to invent new activities that answer well established objectives on this topic. In this tool you will also find **blank sheets** that you can use as a base for your preparation. Please do not hesitate to send your new ideas to the Federation's headquarters so they can be published!

This tool also offers you **quotes** and a few **extracts** from different philosophic or religious movements. We hope that you will discover new reflection themes that will enrich the openness of your group. A few pages dedicated to the main spiritual movements in Belgium will also help you to better address this topic.

Finally, for those of you who are really passionate about spirituality we have added a **bibliography** as well as **internet links** that will guide you to some very interesting books and documents.

Wishing you a successful preparation!



Getting Prepared

Following are a few activities to
prepare oneself and to be ready for
self-reflection.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Help children understand the value of silence,
- Improve their self-control and self awareness.

Section : Beavers**Time :** 10 to 15 minutes**Number :** from 6 to 16 participants**Material :** -**Type :** indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

The beavers are gathered on the playing area.

One of them is blindfolded. As quietly as possible, the others try to approach and touch him.

As soon as he hears some steps the blindfolded beaver says "Steps here" and points at the place where the sound came from.

The designated beaver immediately turns into a statue.

The beavers take it in turns to be blindfolded.

Comments

The leader should take good control of the game and ensure that the statues take their role immediately and remain statues without making any noise.

It is not necessary to change roles when the blindfolded beaver is touched. Continue the activity in silence.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Improve listening to others and concentration skills

Section :	Beavers
Time :	5 to 10 minutes
Number :	any number
Material :	-
Type :	indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

Two beavers are on the playing area. One faces the audience and the other one has her back to the audience and concentrates whilst listening to her partner.

During approximately 30 seconds, the beaver facing the audience will make some sounds that can either tell or not tell a story.

When she finishes, the beaver specifies "I have finished".

The second beaver will then immediately turn around to face everyone and recreate during 30 seconds the movements inspired by those sounds.

Comments

The child does not have to translate all the sounds that she heard into gestures: She might have only remembered one of them, maybe the one that inspired her the most.

You must give free rein to the children's imagination: If the first one says "knock knock", the second one will not necessarily pretend that he is knocking on a door.



Spiritual development objectives:

- Recognising one's place within a group,
- Recognising one's place in relation to other group members

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Explorers

Time : 15 to 20 minutes

Number : from 10 to 20 participants

Material : -

Type : indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

A "game master" is selected and all participants walk around the playing area.

Each person will choose one person to protect and one person to fear, without saying anything to the others. Whilst walking, each person will get closer to the person they wish to protect and walk away from the one they fear. This will be done with great concentration, in honesty and without a word. There will obviously be many possibilities.

The important thing is that all members of the group carefully listen to each other.

You cannot change the chosen persons at a later stage.

The "game master" has to observe everyone and find out who is feared and who is protected by who.

After the first 5 minutes, the game master shares his thoughts and finds out whether he was right or wrong. The group starts again from the beginning with a new game master.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Improve sensitive listening skills and concentration

Section : All**Time :** from 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the age group**Number :** from 6 to 20 participants**Material :** soft music**Type :** indoors**Activity guidelines**

The participants are split into pairs within the game area. Everyone stands approximately one meter away from their partner and looks into each other's eyes. The leader turns on the soft music.

One of the participants within each pair makes slow movements that the other one has to reproduce as if looking into a mirror. So, if the first one lifts her left arm the second one will lift his right arm. Be careful, the two participants should not touch each other as there is supposed to be a mirror between them.

Participants should play this game without taking their eyes off each other. The participants will lead the mirror in turns.

Comments

For children over 8, allow 1 minute of concentration before starting with the movements to release any laughter or tension. Participants should not break the mirror effect (i.e. by both lifting the same arm).

The leader could also suggest the activity « Into each other's eyes » as an introduction to this game.

When playing this game with **Beavers**, you could first get them to face a real mirror to help them understand the concept. It is crucial to show an example before leaving them to play in pairs.

Explain clearly to young children that they can use their whole body as they will tend to use only the upper part. For children over 8, you can also highlight the fact that the face can be used in the same way.

Variation: When participants become comfortable with this exercise, it is possible to also get them to use some of the space around them (From the age of 8).

Spiritual development objective:

- Improve listening to others and concentration skills.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 15 to 20 minutes

Number : from 10 to 20 participants

Material : Soft musical background

Type : indoors

Activity guidelines

Participants are split into two equal groups. The first group spreads around, their back turned towards the centre of the area so that they cannot see the others.

Quietly and with great concentration, each participant of the second group chooses one partner from the first group and stands right behind him resting carefully his hand on the left shoulder of his partner, "just like a butterfly landing delicately on a flower".

The participants with their back turned to the group will try to recognise the other participants through the touch of their hand.

Once a participant is certain to have recognised the person behind him, he puts his right hand onto the hand resting on his shoulder (as if to say "I have recognised you!").

Then, he will turn around and quietly find out whether he was successful or not.

**Comments**

To fulfil this game's objective of concentration and listening to others, it is important to remain silent and to have a soft musical background.

Spiritual development objective:

- Improve the expression of emotions
- Explore a range of emotions through playing and give them a name
- Develop self-confidence

Section : All**Time :** from 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the age range**Number :** from 6 to 20 participants**Material :** Very soft musical background**Type :** Indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

All walking to the same rhythm, participants will move around the game area. When the leader gives the signal (enunciating the emotional state of the statues), the participants will stop, perfectly still, and imitate the requested emotion. They will remain in this position for one and a half minute (1 minute for younger children). For example, the statues could be happy, sad, feeling ill, angry, in love, stressed...

Then, when the leader makes a new signal, participants will walk around in the most neutral manner.

Comments

Advice: Participants should not take the time to think about or « intellectualise » the emotion. Once the signal is given, the emotion must be transformed into a physical expression within seconds. Do insist on spontaneity, the first chosen physical expression will be the right one. Young people need to have trust in what they do and impose their own vision of the various states.

This game is not a spiritual development activity per say as it is more about *playing* an emotion according to the leader's instructions than expressing a personal feeling. However, the interest of this game lies in the fact that it allows young people to explore a wide range of emotions and to name them.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Bring harmony to the group through the ability of listening to others,
- Create a state of relaxation as a basis for meditation

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : Approx. 5 minutes

Number : 2 to 20 participants

Material : mattresses or cushions to sit down comfortably

Type : indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

All participants sit down cross-legged and huddled up against one another with their body relaxed.

The « game master » inhales deeply and starts a long "ohm" with a grave/deep voice.

The group slowly and progressively joins in, some taking over from others when these need to inhale again (breathing from the stomach).

The collective song will get deeper and denser. The group will progressively enter a perfect state of harmony.

Comments

It is important to choose the right time for this activity. For example, the opportunity could arise during the evening around a camp fire...

Do not expect this activity to be taken seriously from the start: there will be some giggles to start with! It is better to take the situation humorously and to persevere.

This activity can also be done in pairs doing the same exercise facing one another and sitting very closely.

Each participant chooses the person he or she wishes to be « in harmony » with.

Spiritual development objective:

- Explore a range of emotions through playing and giving them a name

Section :	Beavers
Time :	5 to 10 minutes
Number :	Any
Material :	Board or Sheet
Type :	Indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

In the centre of the game area, the leader places a board big enough to hide the beaver who will play. (A sheet can also be suitable or a simple line on the floor if no material is available. The beaver will stand to the left of the board. The leader will tell him 2 contrasting states (i.e. « you laugh and you cry »)

The child walks from the left side of the board expressing clearly one of the two states (tears), he then walks behind the board and re-appears on the other side expressing the opposite state (laughter).

Comments

Other examples of emotional states: to love/to hate, to be scared/ to feel secure, to be happy/ to be sad, to be angry/ to be satisfied, to feel guilty/to feel innocent, to be surprised/ to be bored, to be patient/ to be impatient, to be nervous/ to be calm, to be intimidated/ to be self-confident, to be proud/ to be ashamed, to be aggressive/ to be kind...

This game is not a spiritual development activity per say as it is more about *playing* an emotion according to the leader's instructions than expressing a personal feeling. However, the interest of this game lies in the fact that it allows young people to explore a wide range of emotions and to name them.

SPI Activity Sheets



Spiritual development objectives:

- Become aware of the existence of different opinions,
- Debate and argue one's choices,
- Become aware of the different values influencing our choices.
- Listen to others with respect.

Section :	Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	1h00 to 1h30
Number :	minimum 6 participants
Material :	None
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

Set up teams of 6 to 7 participants

The leader tells the following story to the participants:

Each team is responsible for the research taking place in an experimental base located far away from any city. Suddenly, it is the start of the 3rd World War. Bombs are raining down and the world gets destroyed more and more everyday. The whole population is desperately looking for anti-atomic shelters. You receive an emergency call from a research centre, they are desperate and they need help. Here is the message that they leave:

"We are 10 people wanting to enter an anti-atomic shelter which was built for 6 people only. We cannot decide ourselves who is going to stay and who will have to leave. It is impossible for us to decide, we'll end up killing each other if it goes on like this. We think you can help us decide who will enter the shelter and who will not. We'll obey whatever you decide" END OF MESSAGE.

You are running out of time. You only have 30 minutes to reach your shelter and take a decision on the fate of the people who have just called you. It is a hard decision to take as you only have a superficial description of these people. Think carefully as the 6 people entering the shelter might be the only 6 human beings to survive the war.

Below are the descriptions of the 10 people: :

- A 30 year old accountant
- His wife, 6 months pregnant
- A black militant, second year student in medicine
- A 42 year old famous historian
- A biochemist
- A young TV pop star
- A 54 year old rabbi
- A student
- An armed policeman
- A 24 year old carpenter

Choose a time-keeper to warn the group when there will only be 15, 10, 5 and 1 minute left. All groups will then gather and share their results.

Advice for this activity's debriefing

It is very important that everybody listens to what the others have to say. Do not hesitate to bring order back into the groups.

This experience usually generates strong emotional reactions. Some participants may have the tendency to attack one another and strongly criticise other choices. It is important to focus their attention on the concepts of free speech, tolerance, sensitivity and mutual acceptance.

At the end of the activity, the leader can ask the participants if this activity was difficult and why; if some were influenced by others; if some prevented the group from reaching a final decision; if some were stubborn; what values dictated each person's choices...

Variation

The story may change, here is another example:

10 people are in danger of dying. All are in need of an urgent heart transplant. If they don't have immediate surgery, they will die. Only one heart is available. The surgeon needs your help to decide which one will benefit from the transplant and live.

Here are some examples of the possible candidates for the transplant (the number of people can vary)

- *A pregnant 16 year old girl who has given up studying*
- *A policeman convicted of violent behaviour towards his citizens*
- *A 75 year old priest*
- *A 36 year old woman doctor, sterile*
- *A black militant*
- *A 39 year old prostitute*
- *A homosexual architect*
- *A 29 year old alcoholic lawyer*

Source : SIMON S. et al., *A la rencontre de soi-même - 80 expériences de développement des valeurs*, Montréal : Actualisation, 1989, p. 282

Spiritual development objectives:

- Help young people building their value system,
- Encourage the exchange of ideas within a group and the expression of personal feelings.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 15 to 20 minutes

Number : Minimum 12 participants

Material : A4 paper and a big marker

Type : Indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

Ask 9 participants to each hold one letter from the word "tolerance" (1 A4 sheet per letter). The other members of the group will try to find other words related to "tolerance" using those same letters.

**Comments**

If the group is quite large, choose several words (For example: pluralism, difference, violence, family, honesty, etc.)

Here are a few words that can be made with the letters from « tolerance »: race, rant, role, enter!, etc.

Spelling does not really matter. The important thing is that each person is able to give his or her ideas and explain them to the others if he or she wishes to do so.

Variation

The leader notes all the different ideas of words on a big sheet of paper. When the group has finished finding words, everyone gathers around the leader. Each person can then ask questions about the meaning of the words and their link to tolerance. It can be an opportunity to give a definition of the concept or find concrete examples of tolerant or intolerant attitudes. This activity can be an indirect way of making a group realise that they are not always tolerant with each other.

To make this activity more dynamic, the leader could hide the letters in a specified perimeter and ask the young people to find them (i.e. using a compass!).

Source : U.K. SCOUTS, *Sawadee You Pray ? A Join-in-Jamboree Spiritual Resource*, 2003

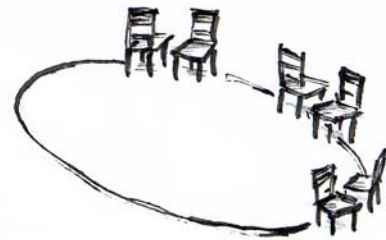
Spiritual development objectives:

- Get to know the others better through their values, emotions, beliefs and convictions,
- Express one's values, emotions, beliefs and convictions,
- Structure one's value system.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers**Time :** 30 minutes**Number :** from 6 to 16 participants**Material :** Chairs, A4 paper and a big marker**Type :** Indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

Arrange the chairs in a circle, two by two, next to one another and facing opposite directions, so that the two people can chat face to face.

Participants will talk in pairs during a set time. Then, at the signal of the leader, all participants stand up and move to the next chair (clockwise), so that everybody changes partner.

**Comments**

Some topics are more difficult to discuss as a group or simply require a more individual exchange. In that case, the « chatting game » technique will be appropriate.

Variation

Ask the participants to divide into pairs and to find a quiet and isolated place with the following instruction: "Discuss a given topic during 20 minutes. During the first 10 minutes, one person talks. The other one may take notes but cannot interrupt. After those 10 minutes, roles are reversed". The leader visits the groups after 10 minutes to remind them to exchange roles.

Get the group to come back together after those 20 minutes. Each person gets the opportunity to express how they felt during the activity or their point of view on the topic. People should not reveal what their partner has said during the chat.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Express things we are proud of,
- Become aware of the importance of our values.

Section : Beavers and Cub Scouts

Time : 45 minutes

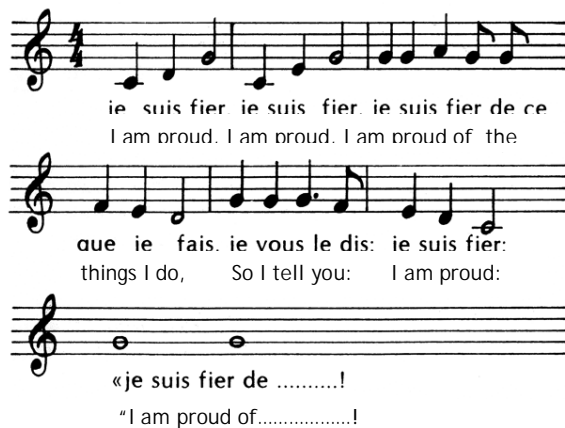
Number : minimum 10 participants

Material : musical instruments

Type : indoors or outdoors

Activity guideline

Ask the participants to sing the following song and to add a personal value that they are proud of at the end of the sentence. Participants can sing the song again and again until they run out of inspiration.



ie suis fier ie suis fier ie suis fier de ce
I am proud. I am proud. I am proud of the

que ie fais ie vous le dis ie suis fier:
things I do, So I tell you: I am proud:

« je suis fier de!
"I am proud of.....!"

Small variation


le suis fier. ie suis fier
I am proud, I am proud,

Fier de le sa- visez -vous?
Proud of... did you know it?

je vous le dis, j'en suis fier.
So I tell you: I am proud.



Spiritual development objectives:

- Know oneself better,
- Get to know the others through their values and beliefs.

Section :	All
Time :	approximately 20 minutes
Number :	minimum 10 participants
Material :	sentences (see the below examples)
Type :	indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

The room has to be cleared in order to define two separate areas.

Before each question, participants gather in the centre of the room.

The leader reads a sentence (i.e. "I am a gushing spring or a placid lake"). Participants make their own choice and stand on the side of the room representing their choice: To the right, the gushing springs, and to the left, the placid lakes.

In both areas, participants split into pairs and take two minutes to explain the reason of their choice. Everybody then comes back to the centre of the room and the leader reads out a new sentence. 5 to 6 sentences are sufficient.

Participants are invited to choose a new partner for each new sentence.

A few examples of sentences

- I save money or I spend money
- I like living in a city or in the country side
- I prefer breakfast or dinner
- I love summer or winter
- I always pay attention or I am a dreamy person
- I am a believer or I am not a believer
- I am an athletic person or I am an intellectual
- I defend my point of view or I always agree
- I am intuitive or rational
- I am a hare or a tortoise
- I am a computer keyboard or a goose quill
- I am a shooting star or a light house at the top of a mountain
- I am a washing line or the tail of a kite
- I am a sign bearing the inscription "No entry" or "public area"
- I ride a motorbike or a bicycle
- I am a mountain or a valley
- I resemble honey or vinegar

Comments

This activity is excellent to use with a group meeting for the first time.

Source : SIMON S. et al., *A la rencontre de soi-même - 80 expériences de développement des valeurs*, Montréal : Actualisation, 1989, p. 90

Spiritual development objectives:

- Structure one's value system by observing how humour can be used to maintain or increase prejudices,
- Get to know ourselves better by understanding the effect that jokes can have on us and on the persons they're aimed at,
- Trigger some reaction when facing situations we do not approve of,
- Introduce the concept of fears hidden in the jokes we tell.

Section :	Scouts/Guides, Explorers
Time :	45 minutes
Number :	Any
Material:	A few jokes relevant to the group (jokes about vegetarians, blondes, rich people, Jews, disabled people, politicians, stars, foreigners, homosexuals, play on words, tricks, cartoons), a hat, a board or a big sheet of paper.
Type :	Indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

First of all, write down the jokes on small pieces of paper, fold them and put them in the hat.

Participants are sat in a circle and the hat goes around for each person to take a small piece of paper and read or mime the joke that is written down. The rest of the group gives a mark out of ten and the scores are written on the board.

At the end of the game, organise a de-briefing. Start by asking the participants how they felt during the game. Then, ask questions such as:

- "Which joke won and why?"
- "Which joke had the lowest mark and why?"
- "What makes a joke unacceptable?"
- "Why do sexist/racist jokes hurt the people that they are aimed at?"
- "How do you react when someone tells you an offensive joke: you smile politely, you laugh like everyone else, you tell the person that you find their joke hurtful, you leave the group without saying a word?"

Comments

Our advice to the leader:

- Choose carefully the jokes to make sure that you will not lose control of the situation.
- Include some positive jokes: drawing cartoons is a good way of making jokes that help us learn something positive about ourselves and the world around us.
- Be very careful not to come up with jokes that can deeply hurt some members of the group.

Source: BRANDER P. et al., Educational kit *All different All equal Education pack: ideas, resources, methods and activities for informal intercultural education with young people and adults*, Strasbourg : European Youth Centre, 1995 (© Council of Europe)

Spiritual development objectives:

- Enrich and structure one's value system by finding and analysing stereotypes, images and prejudices that we have built up,
- Understand how stereotypes work,
- Generate creativity and spontaneity in a group.

Section :	Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	from 45 minutes to 2 hours, depending in the size, motivation and age of the group
Number :	Any
Material :	A list of words to illustrate, a board and a marker to write down the scores, sheets of paper and pens for the drawings, tape or pins to display the drawings of the groups.
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

Set up teams of 3 to 4 people. Call one person from each team and show them a word. All drawers go back to their group and try to draw the word. It is not allowed to draw numbers, flags or currencies (as it would be too easy), nor is it allowed to write words or talk unless it is to confirm that the answer is correct. The other members of the group try to guess what the drawing represents without asking any question.

The first team to find the word announces it and scores one point. A new drawer from each team goes to the leader to receive a new word.

Once all the words have been drawn, the leader asks the groups to write down the corresponding words under each of their drawings, whether these are finished or not. All drawings are then displayed for the participants to compare them, discuss the differences in interpretation and the different images associated to words.

The leader will then organise a debriefing session. This activity should indeed not be limited to drawings. The groups need to think about the risks related to stereotypes and the reasons behind the images we have of others.

Start by asking the participants if they found this activity difficult and why. Then, ask them to observe the displayed drawings and compare the various images associated to the words. Ask if the participants feel that the images correspond to the reality and question the drawers on their choice of images to illustrate the words.

The group can then discuss the nature of the images:

"Are they positive or negative?"

"What effect do they have on our relationship with the people concerned?"

... and about the origin of stereotypes : The role of the **media**, our education, our family, the group...

Comments**Suggestions of words:**

Racism, difference, discrimination, anti-Semitism, refugee, conflict, European, national, farmer, poverty, Muslim, homosexual, equality, HIV positive, gypsy, Japanese, Russian, African, Arab, human rights, American, media, tourist, foreigner, solidarity, blind, love ...

Note: We would suggest that you include the name of a less known community (I.e. the habitants of Slovenia, Moldavia, San Marino...) to show that we seldom have stereotypes about people we have little contact with.

During the debriefing sessions:

Avoid judging the participants' stereotypes.

The evaluation and the discussion must contribute to the understanding of stereotypes: ideas that have little to do with reality.

With cubs, the activity will not be approached with the same depth. It is however possible to get the children to express their views on the meaning of a stereotype and on the possible consequences that it might have in their relationship with others.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Learn to respect silence,
- Bring the group into a state of openness (favourable atmosphere for a SPI activity), arouse the senses,
- Experience meditation.

Section : All**Time :** from 1 minute (for Beavers) to 5 minutes (for the others)**Number :** from 6 to 16 participants**Material :** -**Type :** outdoors**Activity guidelines**

The group needs to be surrounded by nature. Once the group is comfortably settled, still and relaxed, all participants will listen to the sound of nature.

Comments

Naturally, the younger ones or the most restless will make comments or noises to distract the others and try to make them laugh. If it happens, just ask them to continue concentrating. You can stop this activity when the group starts to lose its attention.

With children you can add a competitive element: children will need to remember a maximum of sounds and compare their list with the others at the end of the activity.

Nature holds a different place in everybody's conception of the world, depending on culture, philosophical or religious beliefs. It is interesting to ask participants how much place does nature have in their life and what does it represent for them, especially when dealing with a multicultural group.



Spiritual development objective:

- Explore the concept of equal chances to develop one's value system

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 1h15

Number : from 16 to 30 participants

Material : Scarves, bin bags, chocolate eggs, rope and various objects for the obstacle race, a compass, a master word, big sheets of paper, paint, cardboard for the 3D object

Type : outdoors

Activity guidelines:

The leader asks the participants to divide into 6 groups (4 to 6 participants per group) :

- 1 "young" group
- 1 "old" group
- 1 "girl" group
- 1 "boy" group
- 2 "mixed" groups

A particularity is assigned to each group:

- a group of mutes
- a group of Siamese twins (participants are attached in pairs)
- a group of which half is blind
- a group of which half are paralysed (the other participants carry them)
- a group that can only move around in bin bags (both legs in the bag)
- a group that can only make use of three arms in total

One representative from each group comes to the leader. This one will distribute a list of missions (Same missions for all groups but presented in a different order) :

- A relay race
- An egg hunt
- An obstacle race
- A hidden master word to find in the nature (orientation course, clues, etc.)
- A fresco to paint
- A 3D object to make (i.e. a cube)

Instructions for the groups:

Each group must fulfil its missions in the correct order and as fast as possible whilst respecting their particularity (Time will be recorded for all activities).

All group members must take part in each mission. In the blind and paralysed groups, roles may be changed during the game to avoid weariness.

When the activity is over, the leaders will gather all participants and ask them what they thought of the activity and of the experience (Please wait for everyone to be able to express their feelings before moving on to the next step). Afterwards, the leaders will ask the following questions:

"How does it feel to know that, in any case, you will find it harder to achieve the mission than everyone else?"

"How can we make this game fairer? What changes must be made to the rules? "

"What links can be established between this game and the society we live in? "

At the end of the discussion, the leader will conclude the activity by thanking all participants and giving a short conclusion.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop one's value system through experiencing discrimination,
- Get to know oneself better through the analysis of our attitude towards discriminated groups.
- Discover the mechanisms that maintain minorities on a lower level within our society.
- Become aware of the way we contribute to the maintaining of those unfair social structures.

Section :	Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	60 minutes
Number :	maximum 30 participants
Material :	4 big sheets of paper, 4 old magazines, 4 pairs of scissors, 4 sets of permanent markers, 4 glue sticks, 1 watch
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

Divide the participants into four groups and place them at each corner of the room.

One or several leaders are responsible for taking notes of what is being said or done by the members of each group during the activity.

Announce that the leaders will come through the groups to distribute the material and communicate the instructions.

Go to the first group, give them their material and announce clearly:

"You have one sheet of paper, one magazine, a pair of scissors and some glue. You must make a collage featuring the spring season. You have 20 minutes. Please start whenever you want."

Then, visit the 2nd and 3rd group giving them the same instructions, except that the 2nd group will need to feature summer, and the 3rd group will feature autumn.

Finally, go to the 4th group, give them their material and announce something that could sound like this:

"Mpsso, flosamd loerabtbz losinse bauqvxa poyeks, nseioamans sajjyudo lazerva losifalitome. You have 20 minutes. Please start whenever you want."

Whilst the groups are working, walk around the room to encourage and support groups 1, 2 and 3 but blame group 4 for not doing what they have been asked to do.

After 20 minutes, stop the activity and ask all groups to give you their collage. Organise a debriefing: you can start by asking the members of the groups to give their opinion about the activity and ask them if everyone has participated.

Then, open a discussion comparing this activity and the reality. Here are a few examples of questions that can be used to start the discussion:

"Can you see any connection between this activity and the reality?"

"In our society, who does the 4th group symbolise?"

"Why do we have a tendency to blame the victims of social injustice?"

"How do people who feel that they are victims of social injustice react? Do they react in the same way as the members of the 4th group?"

The notes taken by the observers can be useful to enrich the debate, remind the participants of this or that attitude, etc.

Comments:

This activity may provoke strong reactions from the members of the 4th group, frustrated at not being able to understand the instructions and being blamed for it. They will sometimes take it out on the leaders or the other participants. To avoid this, please make sure:

- To make very mixed groups so that nobody feels targeted.
- To make it clear before the evaluation that this is only a game and that all participants should now detach themselves from the activity.
- To allow each participant to express their feelings during the discussion before starting to analyse what has happened.

Variation:

If you wish to increase the impact of this activity, you can ask the groups to create a small sketch instead of a collage. This will make it even more stressful for the 4th group which will dread the idea of having to play their sketch in front of a public without having understood the instructions. Be careful once again to make sure that nobody's feelings are hurt.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop one's value system through the experience of belonging to a majority or to a minority
- Get to know oneself better through analysing the strategies that we use in order to be accepted by the majority.
- Be aware of the times when we appreciate being part of the majority and when we prefer to be part of the minority.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 40 minutes

Number : 6 to 8 people per circle

Material : some paper and a watch

Type : indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

Divide the participants into groups of 6 to 8 people.

Ask each group to **designate** an observer and an outsider.

Ask the members of the groups to stand **shoulder to shoulder** in order to form a closed circle.

Explain that the outsider needs to try to enter the circle whilst the others try to prevent him from doing so.

Ask the observer to take note on the strategies used by the outsider and by those in the circle. The observer will also be asked to time the activity.

You can give some concrete instructions to the observer:

"What were the participants forming the circle saying to each other and what did they say to the outsider?"

"What did the participants of the circle do to prevent the outsider from entering?"

"What did the outsider say?"

"What did the outsider do?"

After 2 or 3 minutes, whatever the outcome of the outsider's attempt, ask two other participants to play the roles of the observer and the outsider.

The activity ends when all participants wishing to try to force the circle have been able to give it a go.

Please make sure that the participants do not adopt an aggressive behaviour.

At the end of the game, gather all participants to ask them about what happened and what they think about it. You can ask them how they felt in the role as a member of the circle or as an outsider, if those who managed to force the circle feel different from those who did not.

You can ask the observers to talk about the various strategies used by the outsiders, and those used by the members of the circle to stop the outsider.

Afterwards, you can ask the participants to say when, in real life, they like being an outsider or being part of the minority and when do they prefer to be part of the majority. Also discuss which are the strongest groups and the weakest groups in our society?

In our society, the circle can represent privileges, money, power, work or accommodation. Which strategies do outsiders have to use in order to gain access to these resources? How does the majority manage to preserve its status?

Variation:

If there are enough participants to form several groups, you can ask these groups to name themselves. This will reinforce the feeling of identity within the groups.

Follow up suggestion:

Ask the participants to think about how they could become more aware of their own behaviour which can involuntarily lead to the exclusion of others. They could reflect on the following questions:

“Is our section a true reflection of this area’s population?”

“If not, how did we get to this situation?”

“How could we welcome others?”

The leaders can encourage young people to propose concrete ways of welcoming more young people.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Express one's feelings,
- Improve listening to others,
- Learn to know others through our own feelings and beliefs.

Section :	Beavers, Cub Scouts
Time :	40 minutes
Number :	from 6 to 16 participants
Material :	Big sheets of paper, water, paint
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

The leaders play a song once to the whole group (children's song or an easy song)

Then, all participants join their efforts to paint a big fresco with their fingers to express the emotions inspired by the song (the song should continue to be played as background music).

When everyone has finished painting, each participant explains to the group what he has chosen to paint and why.

Comments

One rule must be observed: It is not allowed to paint over someone else's drawing (A drawing can be developed by a second participant as long as it is not spoilt or completely changed)

Spiritual development objectives:

- Bring young people to reflect on themselves
- Bring young people to become aware of how their own values and the way they come across are perceived by others.

Section : Rovers**Time :** 30 to 40 minutes**Number :** Any**Material :** A pen and paper**Type :** Indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

The leaders ask the participants to divide into pairs and to chose a quiet place.

In each sub-group, one person will express:

- What the other person definitely is not,
- A fault that the other person definitely has not got,

According to what they have observed or felt (It can be interesting to take notes but it is not mandatory).

The game will take place in the form of a dialogue

To avoid any frustration, the other person should be able to ask questions and to rectify any information which does not really correspond to him or her. It is however important to remember that the objective of this activity is to be able to see what positive traits the others see in us, even if it is different from what we had thought.

After a set period of time, the roles are reversed.

It is also interesting to change partners in order to create new links within the group.

At the end of this discussion period, the group can gather to exchange their feelings and talk about the content of their dialogues. Of course, not everyone is obliged to talk.

Comments

To make this exercise truly enriching, it is better to organise it with participants who already know each other.

Spiritual development objective:

- Understand the importance of nature : it is a living universe, bigger than us, which can sometimes elude us

Section : All

Time : Approximately 20 minutes, depending on the size of the group

Number : maximum 16 participants

Material : one or two old stethoscopes

Type : outdoors

Activity guidelines

During a walk in the forest, use a stethoscope to listen to the sap travelling through the trunk of the trees all the way to the leaves. It is rather impressive!

It is a good time to start a discussion with your group about the respect of life and nature (including all further discussions on citizenship which this topic can lead to: avoid throwing rubbish in the nature, damaging trees, and polluting in general, etc.)

Nature can hold a different place in each person's perception of the world, depending on our culture and our philosophical or religious beliefs.

It is interesting to ask the participants what place nature holds in their life and what it represents for them, especially when dealing with a multicultural group.

**Comments**

Have you ever seen these crazy people hugging trees?

Some people say that they are able to feel and draw the energy coming from the plant.

Maybe these people aren't crazy after all? Try it with your young people!

How can we know if something is alive?

Does a star live? Does a rock live? Does grass live?

Actually, something is alive when it needs food: a flower drinks the light of the sun and the water from the rain. With the water, the air and the light, it feeds itself and grows.

A being is known to be alive when it breeds or can create other living beings. A rock cannot create other rocks.

Daisies in the field are able to reproduce by using their pollen which travels in the air and is transported by bees.

On our planet, there are billions of living things, there are so many that it is impossible to keep a count of them: it is impossible to count all the grass blades, the shells, the spiders, the weeping willows, the sea weeds, the ravens, the salmons, the human beings, the worms, etc.

The world of the living is the world of human beings, but it is also the world of sea weeds, trees, flowers, rats, snakes, lions, dogs, flies, etc.

On the other hand, planets, rocks, sand, stars, gold are not part of the living. Their world is that of matter.

Spiritual development objectives:

- To make the participants aware of the inequalities that occur when some people receive privileges that others do not have,
- Get to know others through their values and emotions,
- Develop one's value system,
- Express one's emotions.

Section : Beavers, Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides

Time : approximately 50 minutes

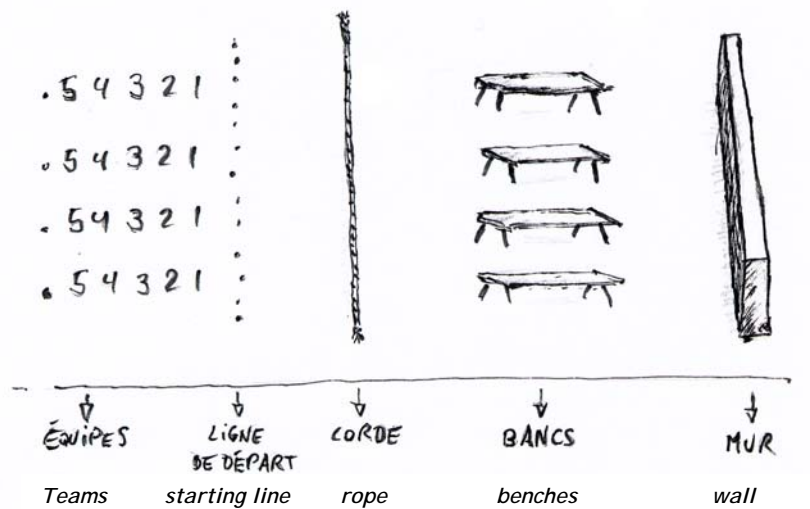
Number : from 16 to 20 participants

Material : 4 benches of the same size, one rope, 4 cards "instructions for the teams", 4 scarves (to symbolise the "wall")

Type : outdoors

Activity guidelinesPhase 1

Prepare an obstacle course as shown below:



- Choose a big piece of land and draw a departure line, long enough for 4 teams to stand behind it in single files.
- Place the rope parallel to the departure line, at one third of the distance of the course.
- Place one bench per team at two thirds of the distance of the course.
- Finally, finish the course with a symbolic "wall" (a row of leaders, scarves, etc...)

Divide the group into 4 teams of equal physical strength.

Phase 2 (10 minutes)

Give one instruction card to each team:

<p><i>Instructions for the teams</i> Relay race : each runner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jumps over the rope▪ Jumps over the bench▪ Touches the wall▪ Jumps over the bench▪ Jumps over the rope▪ Touches the next person	<p><i>Instructions for the teams</i> Relay race : each runner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jumps over the rope▪ Turns once around the bench▪ Touches the wall▪ Turns once around the bench▪ Jumps over the rope▪ Touches the next person
<p><i>Instructions for the teams</i> Relay race : each runner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jumps over the rope▪ Turns twice around the bench▪ Touches the wall▪ Turns twice around the bench▪ Jumps over the rope▪ Touches the next person	<p><i>Instructions for the teams</i> Relay race : each runner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lifts the rope to walk under it▪ Turns three times around the bench▪ Touches the wall▪ Turns three times around the bench▪ Lifts the rope to walk under it▪ Touches the next person

The team members read the card together and check with the help of a leader that they have clearly understood how they should run the race. They should not see the instructions of other teams. Do not mention that the cards are different.

Phase 3 (15 minutes)

The participants start to race each other on the obstacle course in the style of a relay race

Phase 4 (15 minutes)

Once the race is over, start a group discussion about the results of the race:

- Which team managed to finish first and why?
- Which team finished last and why?
- Was it a fair race?
- How did you feel when you were part of the privileged group?
- How did you feel when you were part of a disadvantaged group?
- What should be done to make this race fairer?

Phase 5 (10 minutes)

Start a discussion about every day life situations in which people have to compete despite the fact that some people have been given privileges or disadvantages placing them on different levels.

Those inequalities can be due to races, gender, physical aptitude, language, social class, etc. They can occur at school, in a larger community, at national level or world level.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Structure and develop one's value system, reflecting on the mechanism of oppression, discrimination and exclusion,
- Create a good atmosphere within the group

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 20 to 30 minutes

Number : 10 to 40 participants

Material : 2 balloons and 2 pieces of string (+/- 50 cm) per participant, markers, adhesive labels, 1 notice board, a fairly large playing area

Type : indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

Ask the participants to reflect individually during one minute on the society in which they would like to live and define two characteristics describing it.

Ask them to write down those two characteristics on a label and to come one by one to stick it on the notice board.

Ask them to think about the reasons preventing them from pursuing the 2 objectives of their ideal society. Distribute the markers and give 2 balloons and two pieces of string to each participant. Ask the participants to write down on their balloons the obstacles that prevent them from experiencing their ideal society.

Everyone sits in a circle and reads what they have written on the balloons. The participants attach the balloons to their ankles. Once everyone is ready, explain to the group that they are able to break their "chains", symbolised in this occasion by the balloons. To do so, they simply need to jump on the other participants' balloons and try to burst them.

At the end of the game, organise a debriefing. Ask if the participants liked this activity and then use some of the following questions:

"What makes the obstacle so difficult to knock over?"

"Where do they come from?"

"Do you think that some people need to overcome obstacles more difficult than others?"

"Who do you think has the heaviest chains? Can we help them to break their chains?"...

This discussion can lead to concrete actions. The group can decide to take action to realise one aspect of their ideal society.

Comments

Balloons can be replaced with condoms. This could help to overcome sex and AIDS taboos. Please note that condoms are harder to burst than balloons!

Source : BRANDER P. et al., Educational kit *All different All equal Education pack: ideas, resources, methods and activities for informal intercultural education with young people and adults*, Strasbourg : European Youth Centre, 1995 (© Council of Europe)

Spiritual development objectives:

- Clarify one's value system,
- Try to find an answer to our existential questions: what is the aim of life? What is it that influences our actions? ...

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers (questions should be adapted according on the age of the participants)

Time : 60 minutes

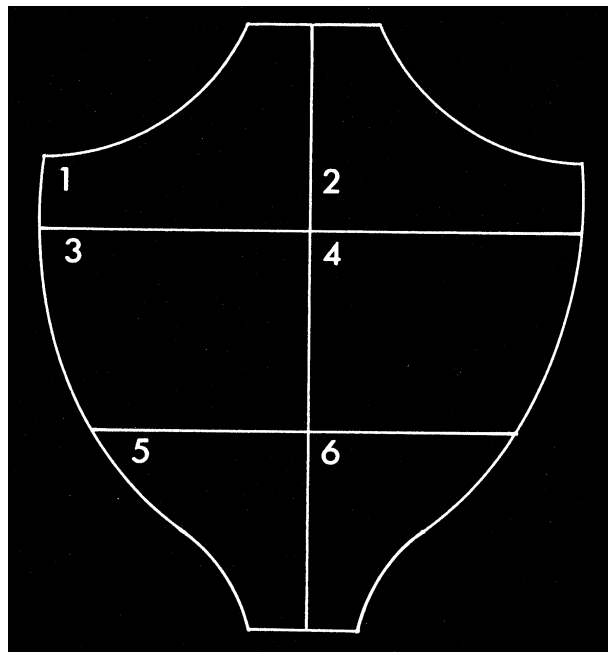
Number : Any

Material : A pen and a sheet of paper for each participant

Type : indoors

Activity guidelines

Each participant draws the sketch below on a sheet of paper. It is their personal coat of arms:



The participants will then draw a picture or a symbol in each section, answering the below questions:

1. What is the greatest achievement of my life?
2. What is my best quality?
3. What gesture can a person do to make me happy?
4. What has been my worst failure?
5. Which project would I undertake if I only had one year to live and if I was guaranteed a total success?
6. If I were to die today, which are the three comments that I would like to hear people say about me? (Or, if I left for good to go and settle in another country...).

Remember! Questions should be answered using only drawings, not words.

Here is an alternative list of questions:

1. Is there one point on which you'll never give in?
2. Is there something that I would like to obtain by any means (or to be or to become)?
3. Which goal would I like to have reached before my 65th birthday?
4. Three areas in which I am excellent.
5. The motto which directs my life.

Some advice for this activity's debriefing

The leaders can invite the participants who wish to do so to exchange and talk about their coat of arms. They will explain their drawings and symbols but retain the right to reveal only as much as they wish.

This activity is very personal and therefore does not necessarily need a session of debriefing. Some participants might not wish to share their existential questions with others.

The participants could also display their work in the form of an art gallery.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Get to know ourselves better through exploring the link between what people expect from us and the way we behave,
- Understand the consequences that our own behaviour can have on others,
- Develop and structure one's value system through a discussion on stereotypes.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 45 minutes

Number : minimum 10 participants

Material : one label per person

Type : indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

To prepare this activity, the leader will write a characteristic on each label (i.e. irresponsible, spiritual, stupid, intelligent, clumsy...) and think of a task to give to the group (cooperate to create something, organise a debate...)

Then, the leader will stick a label on the forehead of each participant, without telling them what is written on it. The leader explains the mission to the group and points out that they should behave with each other according to what they can read on the labels.

For example, if one participant has the "lazy" label stuck to his forehead, the other participants will have to treat him in that way (without telling him what's written on his label).

The players will have to see their mission through. At the end of the game, if they wish to do so, the participants can try to guess what's on their label, although this is not the main aim of this game.

Once the mission is over, the leader will organise a debriefing session. It is essential to let everyone express themselves. The leader will ask the following questions:

"How did you feel during this activity?"

"Is it difficult to treat others according to their labels?"

"Did some of the participants start to behave like their label read? (For example, did someone labelled as "funny" start to tell jokes or did another one labelled as "lazy" stop participating?)"

"What kind of labels do we put on people in reality? What consequences does it have on them and on the way we perceive them?"

"In real life, who has been given a label?"

"Does this label reflect reality?"

Comments

Some advice for the leader: Be careful when choosing the labels.

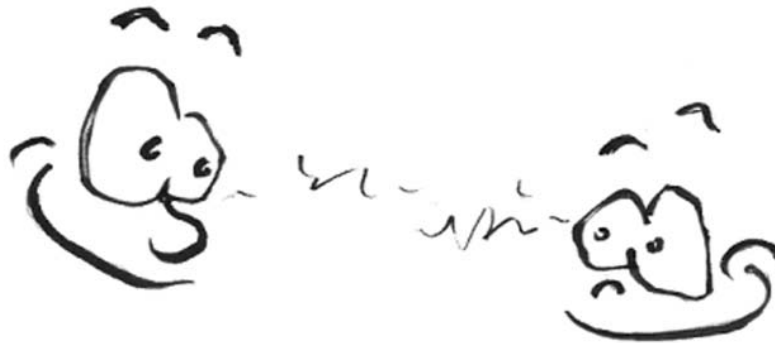
For example, if one of the participants tends to be lazy, it is better to avoid giving him that label.

The objective of this game is not to uncover the opinions that participants have about each other, as this could have a very negative impact on the group.

Follow up suggestion: During future activities, to avoid young people being "labelled", make sure that they do not always play the same role or have the same function.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Get to know the emotions and the personality of others through eye contact,
- Develop concentration

Section : All**Time :** approximately 10 minutes**Number :** from 6 to 16 participants**Material :** stirring music**Type :** indoors**Activity guidelines**

The leaders put on some stirring music

The participants walk around the playing area

At the leader's signal (i.e. hand clapping), participants stop and gaze into the eyes of the participant standing next to them.

Then, everyone continues to walk and at the next signal, participants will gaze into the eyes of another person.

Comments

It is not necessary to give additional explanations to the children.

When executed rigorously, this activity can help children to concentrate.

With older participants, it is possible to organise a discussion to allow them to express their thoughts on the activity, how they felt and what it might have brought them.

SPI Activity	My difference, my resemblance	Sheet - A20
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Spiritual development objectives:

- Introduce the concept of difference and the consequences of discrimination,
- Develop one's value system,
- Get to know ourselves better.

Section :	Beavers, Cub Scouts
Time :	20 minutes
Number :	from 6 to 16 participants
Material :	-
Type :	indoors and outdoors

Activity guidelines

The group sits in a circle.

The leader asks the participants to express the main difference and the main resemblance that they see between themselves and the person sitting on their left.

Please allow some time for each participant to think about the following:

"In what way am I different from my neighbour?"

"In what way are we very similar?"

Comments

This activity can be used when the leaders notice that a participant tends to be excluded from the group (due to the colour of their skin, a disability, etc).

The leader should sit at the right of the excluded. Instead of choosing the characteristic which is the cause of his exclusion, the leader could for example choose the gender difference: "I am a boy, she's a girl".

On the other hand, the leader will put forward one of her qualities to help her gain the appreciation of the group.

Some participants will certainly react to the leader's words, for example, to say that they can see another difference.

This will be the opportunity to start a short discussion. Make sure that the focus is not put on the reason of the discrimination.

Moreover, the concerned child should always have the possibility to express his or her feelings to the group ("What is your opinion?")

Spiritual development objectives:

- Allow young people to be filled with silence, communicating their emotions and values through other means than words,
- Set an atmosphere favourable to concentration and meditation.

Section : All**Time :** from 20 minutes up to 2 hours!**Number :** Any**Material :** Beavers: blank mandalas, printed on A3 sheets, markersCub Scouts: small natural elements of different colours (leaves, shells, sand, petals, seeds, etc.)Scouts/Guides and Rovers: string, coloured grains and powders (sand, salt stained with markers, spices, etc.)**Type :** Indoors or outdoors, depending on the type of mandala**Introduction:**

"MANDALA" is an ancient Sanskrit word meaning the centre, the circumference, the magical circle. For thousands of years, mankind has used the circle as a symbol of life, death or rebirth.

In the East, the *Mandala*, a drawing composed of circles and various coloured shapes, was one way of perpetuating this tradition.

Do not consider this activity simply as a time for artistic expression.

Although, in a western context (so far away from the tranquillity and atmosphere of the Himalayan high plateau), the mandala can sometimes be seen as an admirable cultural curiosity, it is regarded as a major discipline in countries such as India or Tibet.

It is used as a support for meditation, self-knowledge, spiritual development and our relationship to others and the universe.

Creating a mandala allows us to concentrate on ourselves and calm our minds.

It is the reason why the drawing of a mandala always starts with its circumference, progressing slowly towards the centre.



Activity guidelines

Beavers: The leader shows the beavers a few examples of coloured mandalas and draws their attention to the symmetry of shapes and colours. The leader then invites the children to colour blank mandalas.

He sits 4 children around each mandala (this explains the need for an A3 format).

The colouring of the mandala needs to be done as a team, starting from the circumference and progressing towards the centre. The colouring needs to be symmetrical.

The children are allowed to speak to each other but it should be kept to a minimum.

Cub Scouts: This variation is based on an ephemeral mandala. With the help of a leader, the children will draw the outline of a mandala in the earth, sand or by using chalk. Then, in teams of 3 or 4, they will start colouring the mandala in a symmetrical way, from its circumference to its centre, using natural elements. The smaller the elements, the more time it will take and the prettier it will look! The children should talk as little as possible.

S/G and Rovers: This variation is also based on an ephemeral mandala. The participants will divide into teams of 3 or 4. Each group will make a symmetrical mandala stencil using pieces of string. This stencil can be made on the floor or a table. In silence, the group will fill in the shapes of the mandala, symmetrically, starting from its circumference by using the coloured grains and powders. Once the mandala is completely coloured, the stencil can be carefully removed.

Comments

Below are two websites offering blank mandalas:

<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/rickylasouris/mandalas/mandala.htm>

<http://membres.lycos.fr/dharmafog/bdhf01.htm>

Spiritual development objectives:

- Express one's emotions in a positive way and share them with the group,
- Improve one's self-knowledge.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers**Time :** approximately 15 minutes**Number :** from 6 to 20 participants**Material :** Dynamic and melodious music to lighten the mood, A4 paper, tape**Type :** Indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

Ask the group to form a circle. Each participant sticks a sheet of blank paper on the back of one of their neighbours.

Each group member will then write a few words on the back of all other participants to thank them for what they give to them.

Example: "thank you for making me laugh", "thank you for your gentleness", "thank you for being my friend", etc.

Between two messages, participants will move to the next person following the rhythm of the music.

The activity is over when everyone in the group has received a few words from all others on their back. At the end, participants can read the messages written on their back. They can also decide to fold the sheet of paper and read it at another time.

Comments

The time for this activity can be reduced by asking the participants to write on the back of six other people only, but you should then ensure that no sheets remain blank (without having to insist too much on it!).

Variation

With an older group, the few 'thank you' words can be replaced by a full sentence to each participant: "Hi Tom! What I like about you is..."

Source: U.K. SCOUTS, *Sawadee You Pray? A Join-in-Jamboree Spiritual Resource*, 2003

Spiritual development objectives:

- Bring young people to discover different cultures, to get to know the other members of the group better and to express themselves about something which is of value to them,
- Develop their ability to listen to others.

Section : All**Time :** 15 to 20 minutes**Number :** from 6 to 16 participants**Material :** one personal object for each participant**Type :** indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

For your next group meeting, ask each member of the group to bring an object which is of value to them, either because it comes from their home country, or because it has a sentimental value, or because it is an original and rare object...

All participants sit down comfortably in a circle. Each participant describes the object that they have brought, its use and the reason why it is so valuable to them.

Comments

Leaders have tried this activity with Beavers because they had noticed that some of them would never hold hands with children of African origin. This activity helped changing their behaviour because it allowed everyone to find out an interesting aspect about others, and to arouse the group's curiosity about differences.

It is not a problem if one of the children has forgotten to bring their object! It does not change anything... They can always draw it or shape it using plasticine... You can also invite them to bring it at the next meeting?

SPI Activity	Torn paper	Sheet - A24
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Spiritual development objectives:

- Reflect on and talk about our values and our emotions with the group,
- Together, find a solution to a given problem.

Section :	All
Time :	20 minutes
Number :	from 6 to 16 participants
Material :	an image (size A4) relating to the topic which we wish to discuss
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

The chosen image should relate to a society issue, a characteristic of the group which could cause some trouble (i.e. a picture showing a polluted area in your region, two children fighting, stressed people, an image picturing injustice, violence, theft, etc.).

To make this activity enriching, the situation shown on the image should be relatively close to the group's preoccupations.

The leader shows the image to the participants and asks them what they see. Then, if necessary, the leader reformulates the theme, the situation shown on the picture (to ensure that everyone will be talking about the same thing). Then, the leader tears the photo into pieces in front of the participants and asks the following question: "What can we do to improve the situation?".

Each time an idea is put forward, one participant sticks two pieces of the image back together.

Comments

Where it is possible, the leader can encourage the group to act upon their suggestions for improving the situation.

When organising this activity, never choose pictures showing members of the group (they would not appreciate being torn into pieces!)

Spiritual development objective:

- Help young people to express their feelings, their values, and to share them with the rest of the group.

Section : Rovers**Time :** 30 to 40 minutes**Number :** max 20 participants**Material :** post-it notes, pens, string**Type :** outdoors**Activity guidelines**

Before the activity, the leader will locate and choose 6 to 7 special places in the area (a nice clearing in the forest, an outstanding tree, a fly-tipping area, a river, a picnic area, etc.).

The leader will set the course and mark out the chosen places with a piece of string tied to a branch.

Post-it notes and pens are left at each location.

The participants start the course individually, leaving 2 minutes between each other.

At each marked location, the participants will use a post-it to write down the feelings that this place evokes. The participant then sticks the post-it note at the exact place where it's been written.

The person reaching the same place a couple of minutes later will also write down their feelings, stick their post-it note and take the post-it note of the former person away.

Once everyone has gone round the course, all participants stick their post-it notes on a main board.

The group sits down in a circle and each participant is invited to speak and share their opinion and feelings with the group.

Comments

A leader can choose to go around the course first so that the next participant is able to find post-it notes on the way. A leader should also go last to collect the last post-it notes. Participants are allowed to overtake one another to avoid always taking the post-it notes of the same person.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Improve our self-knowledge through our relationship with nature,
- Discover our natural surroundings.

Section : All**Time :** From 15 to 45 minutes, depending on the age of the group**Number :** Any**Material :** Drawing paper, paper, pencils, magnifier, binoculars, etc. + anything that the participants wish to use.**Type :** outdoors**Activity guidelines**

The leader asks all members of the group to choose a small place where they feel good.

It can be sitting under a tree, in the middle of a field, in a clearing, near a pond or a lake, next to an old stone wall, etc.

In this way, each participant will have their "small personal place" (SPP).

The place should be fairly small (max a few of square meters) and personal enough to create a sense of belonging.

There should be a fair distance between all SPP's to give each member some peace and quiet.

Regularly, during camps or meetings, each young person will spend some time in their SPP.

This time should be neither too short (for the participants to be able to benefit from the atmosphere of their SPP) nor too long (to avoid boredom).

The participants can do whatever they wish (in the respect of nature of course): observe, draw, write... and take any material they need: paper, pencils, binoculars...

With the passing days, they will familiarise themselves with their SPP, with the animals, the plants, the smells and the sound of nature.

What they first considered as "unknown ground" will become more and more familiar.

**Comments**

The leader could perhaps organise a discussion with the group during which each participant would be able to express how they feel, what they have seen, what they have discovered or experienced whilst being in their SPP.

This phase is not mandatory. It is up to the leader to see if it is needed or required by the group. For example, some participants may not wish to share intimate moments with others and that is their right.

With Beavers, the activity should be closely overseen by the leaders. The activity time should be kept to a max of 15 minutes. The leaders should constantly walk around the group. The size of the area will be reduced.

It would be preferable not to organise the activity if the group is too large to be managed properly.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Express one's emotions and share them with the group,
- Develop one's ability to listen to others,
- Get to know the people around us through the way they feel.

Section : Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : approximately 1 hour

Number : from 6 to 20 participants

Material : 5 different songs

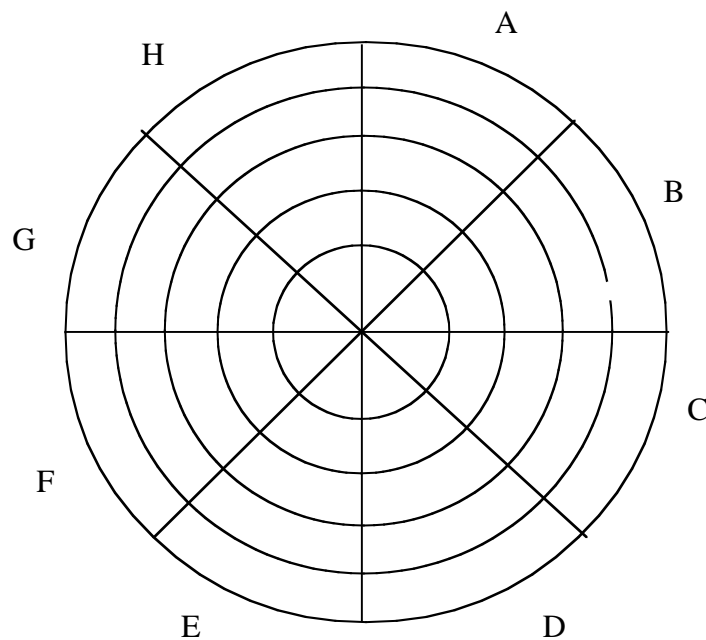
Type : indoors

Activity guidelines

First of all, the leader prepares a chart just like the one below.

This circle is divided by the number of participants in each team (A, B, C...). For example, the below chart would suit a team of 8 participants.

Each team will have a max of 10 participants and will require the help of a leader.



The activity is composed of 5 identical phases, each of them consisting of:

- a. listening to a piece of music in a relaxed atmosphere
- b. associating ideas with to the chosen theme
- c. allowing the participants to express how they felt

In other words, the participants listen to the music and express their reaction, how it made them feel, using the different themes associated to the songs).

The leaders will write down the words associated to the reactions of the group in the graph, making a map of the group's sensitivities.

Below is an example for a team of 8 people:

Music 1 : Sting, *Saint Agnes and the burning train*.

Theme: a colour.

Music 2 : Karl Orff, *Carmina Burana*

Theme: a door.

Music 3 : Jeff Buckley, *Hallelujah*.

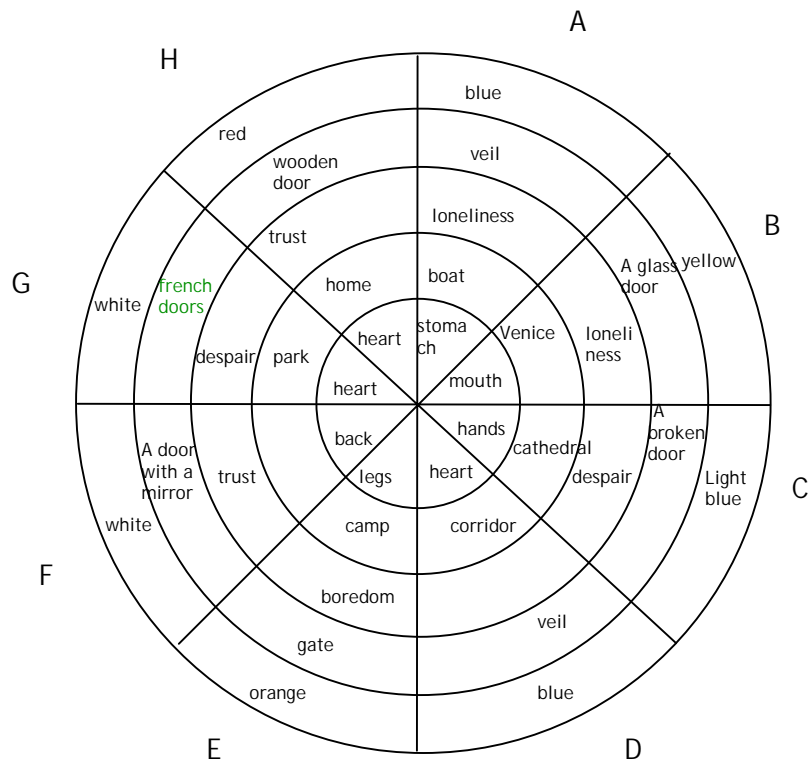
Theme: a mood.

Music 4 : Dead Can Dance, *The Host of Seraphim*.

Theme: a place.

Music 5 : Caetano Veloso, *Cucurrucucu*.

Theme: a part of the body.



The charts are then posted in the room for all the participants to see how the other groups felt.

This will create a good occasion to discuss casually about the various interpretations.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop expression and build up a value system,
- Share one's values with the group,
- Get to know the others through their feelings, their beliefs and their values.

Section :	Beavers
Time :	15 minutes
Number :	from 6 to 12 participants
Material :	7 to 8 photos per child. Please ensure that several children have similar or identical photos as it will allow comparison (photos can be found in magazines and can be photocopied). Each photo should be associated to another one (good/evil ; beautiful/ugly, etc.)
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

The leader sits the children around a few tables.

Each participant should have some space.

Using a piece of chalk, the leader draws a vertical line in front of each participant and distributes the photos.

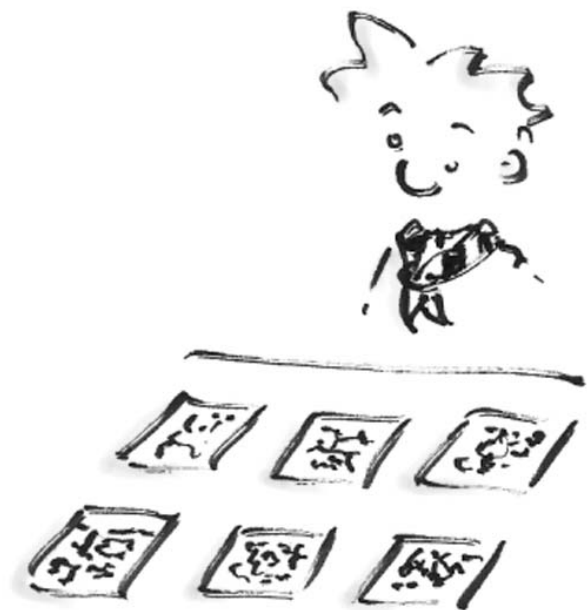
He then asks the children (individually) to put on one side of the line the pictures showing something nice, and on the other side of the line the pictures showing something bad (or beautiful/ugly, good/evil, happy/unhappy, fair/unfair, etc.).

The leader walks quietly from one Beaver to the other to spot the differences and similarities in their choices.

Once everyone has finished, the entire group goes from one table to the other.

In case of similarities, differences, or unusual choices, the leader asks the children to explain their choices.

Avoid asking all children to explain their choices. This activity should not last too long; otherwise the children might stop paying attention.



Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop expression and build up a value system,
- Share one's values with the group,
- Get to know the others through their feelings, their beliefs and their values.

Section :	Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	Approximately 30 minutes
Number :	From 6 to 16 participants
Material :	Some photos (that you have taken or found in a magazine, on the internet, etc.)
Type :	Indoors

Activity guidelines

All the photos are spread over the ground or a large table. The leader invites the participants to look at them in silence for 2 or 3 minutes. Each participant will then choose a photo that means something to them.

The group sits down comfortably in a circle, on the floor. When participants wish to express themselves (and only if they wish to do so), they can do so by using the three points below:

1. **Describe the photo** (What I see, **objectively**)

Example: It is two white hands. One belongs to an adult and the other one to a child. They are holding onto each other.

2. **How does it make me feel** (my **feelings**)

Example: These hands reassure me. To me they represent protection and friendship. When there are two of us, we are stronger to face the world.

3. **What does it remind me of** (through the **association of ideas**)

Example: This photo reminds me of my grand dad. He's my friend as well as being my grand dad. We often go walking together on Sundays along the coast.

Variation

Participants express themselves following these three points:

1. Describe the photo
2. What is it in this photo that attracts me?
3. What is very important to me and for which I would fight with all my strength / What is very important to me and is something that I always look for in my life, something which makes me happy when I get close to it.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop expression and build up a value system,
- Share one's values with the group,
- Get to know the others through their feelings, their beliefs and their values.

Section :	Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	Approximately 30 minutes
Number :	From 6 to 16 participants
Material :	Some photos (that you have taken, found in a magazine or on the internet, etc.)
Type :	Indoors

Activity guidelines

All the photos are spread over the ground or a large table. The leader invites the participants to look at them in silence for 2 or 3 minutes. Each participant will then choose 2 photos that mean the most to him, following these instructions:

- A photo which inspires a pleasant feeling
- A photo which inspires an unpleasant feeling

Several participants may choose the same photo. The group sits down comfortably in a circle, on the floor. When participants wish to express themselves (and only if they wish to do so), they can do so by using the points below:

- **Describe the photo** (what I see, **objectively**)
Example: There are two business men, standing on the starting line in an athletic stadium, each holding a leather case in their hand.
- **How does it make me feel** (my **feelings**) and why does this photo mean a lot to me?

Example: When I look at this photo, I feel sad and distressed at the same time. I find that the society which we live in forces us to do everything fast and well, resulting in people not allowing enough time to live together.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop expression and build up a value system,
- Share one's values with the group,
- Get to know the others through their feelings, their beliefs and their values.

Section : All**Time :** approximately 30 minutes**Number :** from 6 to 16 participants**Material :** around 20 photos per team (that you have taken yourself, found in a magazine or on the internet, etc.), one table per team, a pen or pencil for each participant**Type :** indoors**Activity guidelines**

Divide the participants in teams of 5. This is a silent photo language exercise. Participants are therefore not allowed to speak nor make any sound during the activity: The team members must remain perfectly silent and can only communicate through the use of signs.

Each team stands around a table. The leader will call out the instructions one by one leaving enough time between each of them:

1. Among the 20 photos on your table, decide with the rest of your team and always in silence which 12 would best answer the following question: "What is necessary to build peace?"
2. Once all the teams are ready, still in complete silence, decide which 3 you could remove from those 12.
3. Same question again
4. Now place the remaining 6 photos in a logical order which you think best answers the question under point 1.
5. Now, individually and still in silence, write down a sentence which would best translate the team's sequence of photos.

At this stage of the activity, the participants may speak again. The entire group will walk from one table to the other to look at the sequences of images. Each participant reads the sentence that they wrote. Participants may also share how they felt when doing this activity with their team.

Comments

This activity is both relaxing and funny at the same time. The body language will be so exaggerated that an observer can easily spot those who try to impose their ideas and those who prefer to negotiate.

The theme suggested above is only an example.

You are free to use another theme which would best answer the needs of your group.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Have an opinion on controversial topics,
- Have a group discussion about each person's convictions/beliefs,
- When possible, take some action according to the debated topic.

Section : Rovers**Time :** between 1 and 1.5 hours**Number :** any**Material :** Blank paper or large sheets of cardboard, markers**Type :** Indoors or outdoors**Activity guidelines**

Ask the participants to choose a question or a current event which gives them a strong feeling of injustice, disgust, anger...You can suggest a few controversial topics yourself.

Once the topics are chosen, the participants will divide into several groups depending on the interest they have for the various topics.

Each group will create a protest banner bearing a provocative slogan.

Once everyone is ready, all posters are posted on the wall and the discussion can begin.

Advice for this activity's debriefing

It is important to draw the participants' attention to the respect of others, the respect of their convictions, the freedom of speech, tolerance, sensitivities and mutual acceptance.

Each group will have the opportunity to express and explain themselves. You can then invite the other participants to:

- Explain the meaning of their slogan and their choice of topic
- Give their opinion on the slogan: Is it a good choice? Is it too simplistic?
- Give their opinion on the argument used
- Give their opinion on the choice of the topics

You can ask the group what they thought of this activity, in which way was it difficult or easy.

This activity might provoke a desire for action. It could be the right moment to encourage the group to react, to express their point of view to the authorities, to express their wish to change the situation, to think about concrete actions that could lead to a real change.

Source : SIMON S. et al., *A la rencontre de soi-même - 80 expériences de développement des valeurs*, Montréal : Actualisation, 1989, p. 255

Spiritual development objectives:

- Have an opinion on controversial topics,
- Have a group discussion about each person's beliefs,
- Qualify one's opinion

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers (adapt the question according to the age group)

Time : approximately 45 minutes

Number : from 10 to 20 participants

Material : 30 chairs

Type : indoors

Activity guidelines

Before the activity, arrange the 30 chairs in a U shape (3 x 10 chairs). Ask the participants to choose any place they want and to sit down.

Explain that the group will need to debate a certain number of assertions.

Each time an assertion is stated, the participants need to take a position: They sit on the left row of chairs if they agree, the right row if they do not agree, or in the centre if they do not wish to take a position.

During the debates, participants are allowed to move from one row to the other whenever they wish to do so.

The leader reads out the first assertion.

Once everyone has chosen a place, the leader starts questioning the participants who have refrained from taking any position. He could, for example ask them why they have chosen not to take a position straight away (without forcing them to express their opinion if they do not want to).

Then, the leader asks if any of the other participants wish to express themselves. The participants signal to the leader with their hand when they wish to speak, waiting for the leader to give them the floor. The debate starts.

A few examples of assertions:

- It is necessary to keep our bedroom tidy and clean
- Children should work to earn their pocket money
- It is sometimes ok to cheat
- It is sometimes necessary to lie
- Girls can also play with trucks and guns
- Boys can also play with dolls
- School should not be mandatory
- Children should be given the right to vote
- Dangerous criminals should be sentenced to death
- It is essential to have many friends
- It is a good thing that divorce is allowed nowadays
- It is better to get married before having children
- Without television we could not be properly informed

- Money is meant to be spent
- The use of marijuana should be legalised
- It would be good to forbid the sale of cigarettes
- The most important thing in life is to be liked
- To be liked nowadays, people should watch their weight
- It is easy to learn about people by the way they dress
- The money spent to send someone on the moon was a good investment
- It is good that couples are able to use artificial insemination to have children
- There's no accounting for taste
- It is the intention that counts
- We should not always do as we are told
- Time is money

Comments

Throughout the debate, remind the participants to respect others and their convictions whilst emphasising the importance of the freedom of speech, tolerance, sensitivities and mutual acceptance.

It is possible to disagree with someone without stating that the other person is stupid.

To make sure that the debate doesn't become a confused hubbub, it is important for the leader to properly manage the floor, and to regularly summarize the opinions that have already been stated.

The leader should also manage the time allocated for each assertion and conclude the debate when nothing constructive is coming out of it.

Finally, the leader should also ensure that all participants are able to justify their position, and are able to change their mind if they wish to do so.

The difficulty with this activity is to choose assertions that generate many different points of view, and which are voluntarily ambiguous (or controversial): If the statement provokes the same reaction throughout the group, the activity loses all its interest.

However, the leader should also be careful not to choose topics that relate too closely to the private life or the identity of the participants as they might not be happy to discuss the subject in public.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Structure one's value system,
- Express one's emotions, values and beliefs,
- Develop one's ability to listen to others and get to know others through their own values and beliefs.

Section :	Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	Enough time to become familiar with the medium + 1 hour
Number :	from 10 to 20 participants
Material :	An attractive and appropriate medium (text, song, video), material to stick, draw, paint, dress up...
Type :	indoors

Activity guideline

After reading of text, listening to a song, or watching a video, suggest these four steps to the participants:

1. In small groups of 4 or 5, choose a sentence or an extract that means something to you or has caught your attention.
2. Extract the value(s) referred to in this sentence (What message does it convey?).
3. Make a slogan out of it.
4. Create a banner with the aim of making the public sensitive. The public may be the parents, the other branches, passers-by, etc (The leader or the participants choose their means of expression: collage, drawing, painting, torn paper, etc.)

Comments

The advantage with this type of activity is that the group can keep a memento of its outcome (In their meeting room, in a personal notebook, etc.). The type of medium chosen for this activity can vary a lot: texts, songs, fairy tales, videos, news article, etc. The leader should however pay attention to two aspects:

First of all, the medium's content should be adapted to the targeted age group. If it takes more time to explain the meaning of the medium than to do the reflection exercise itself, the spiritual development objective will be missed (The discussion will not have much chances of taking off)

Secondly, the leader should remember that the younger the public is, the faster it will stop paying attention. With cubs for example, we would advise to use a film as a medium.

Text examples are provided in this tool. With cubs, apart from children books, The Jungle Book and the Master Words can also be a useful tool.

Finally, here are some ideas of films to use with Rovers: Bowling for Columbine (by Michael Moore), 1984 (based on the novel of George Orwell).

The leader must always watch or read the support before showing it to the group!

Variation:

Invite the participants to express themselves through the gathering of everybody's work (exhibition, theatre show, etc.)

Spiritual development objectives:

- Become sensitive to differences & to one's own personal resources,
- Develop one's value system,
- Express one's emotions.

Section :	Beavers, Cub Scouts
Time :	1.5 hours
Number :	from 10 to 20 participants
Material :	scarves, a stack of branches, a watch, play dough, string and some obstacles for the race
Type :	outdoors

Activity guidelines

Here is a game suggestion which has been organised in a Belgian scout group. It is now up to you to find a magical framework for it and choose a theme!

The activity takes place in three phases:**1. A game with different "stations" (approximately 30 minutes) :**

Divide the group into small teams of 4 or 5, each team should have their own special characteristic:

- One team is blind folded,
- The second team has their hands tied behind their back,
- A third team has their feet tied together
- The last team is mute (participants can make noise, sounds, but they are not allowed to open their mouth during the activity).

Here are the various stations to organise:

- **A "blind course"**: One participant is blind folded; the other participants guide him through the obstacle course using only their voices. The course is not timed, but the leader will count one penalty point each time the "blind" participant walks out of the limits. The "mute" team can guide their "blind" by making noise but not talking. The "blind" team can uncover their eyes to look at the obstacle race but must be blind folded again once the activity starts.
- **A stack of branches to move in several journeys**, as quickly as possible. The whole team can play at the same time. Give 3 penalty points to the slowest team, etc. (0 to the fastest).
- **A timed relay race**. The participants must complete the course in bunny-hop style. Add one penalty point each time the participant does not perform a valid bunny-hop.
- **Learn a short song and sing it together**. The "mute" team can hum it but cannot talk as it would cost them 2 penalty points!
- **Make something out of play dough**.

Depending on the type of activity offered at each station, some teams will get a head start and others will be disadvantaged.

If you wish to modify the stations, here is a table which will allow you to visualise the handicaps (H) and advantages (A) for the different teams:

	Play dough	Blind course	Stack of branches	Relay race	Song
Blind folded	H	H	H	H	A
Hands tied	H	A	H	H	A
Feet tied	A	H	H	A	A
Mute	A	H	A	H	H

At the end of this first phase, the leader will add up the points for each team, establish a classification and announce the results in front of the whole group. The results will of course be unbalanced and can provoke a strong feeling of injustice in some of the participants!

2. A discussion led by the leader (15 minutes)

The group sits comfortably and in turn all participants express their feeling towards the activity which they have just experienced. Once everyone has been able to express their point of view, the group tries to find a solution to make the game fairer (The children might not spontaneously think about changing the composition of the teams! The role of the leader is to ask the right questions thereby allowing the children to find the solution for themselves).

3. Same game as in Phase 1 of the activity (30 minutes)

This time, the teams are mixed (as per the discussion in phase 2) so that the teams are better balanced (please refer to the H & A table above). This time the results will be less disproportionate. Also, as the children will succeed where they have previously failed, it will give them a true feeling of satisfaction.

To conclude the activity once this last phase is over, the leader will help the group to draw a conclusion on the experience: the more varied a team is, the stronger it is.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Become aware of the differences and similarities within a group,
- Improve our self-knowledge,
- Clarify our life objectives.
- Define our own values.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : between 1 and 1.5 hours

Number : Any

Material : Pens and paper

Type : Indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

Ask the participants to write down on a piece of paper the name of a person they would like to be like: a person they would like to identify with.

This can be a sci-fi character, a public figure, a movie star, a singer...

Then, the participants choose the person they would like to resemble the least: a person who they do not identify with.

Finally, the participants choose a person who resembles them: a person or character who is close to the image they have of themselves.

Each time, the participants will also write down the reasons that motivated their choice.

Once everyone has finished their list, the group divides into small teams of 3 to 5 participants.

Each participant presents their list and the reasons behind their choices.

Advice for the debriefing of the activity

You can start the discussion with the following questions:

- Did anything surprise you? Were some of the chosen people unknown to you? Why?
- Do you think somebody else could write down your name on their list?
- If you could start all over again, would you choose the same people?
- Which values can you identify through your choices?

Advice to the leader

This activity can have more success if the participants are informed in advance. This will allow them time to gather photos and documents about their choices.

Trust is a key element during the discussion time, it is therefore recommended to let the participants create their groups spontaneously: they might not be prepared to reveal their list to anyone.

If the group does not divide itself well enough, you may set the teams to allow the discussions to take place under the best possible conditions.

It is crucial that the participants' are reminded to respect freedom of speech, tolerance, sensitivities and mutual acceptance. The participants will open up and reveal themselves through their three chosen characters. Holding up a character to ridicule will have the same effect as doing it to the participant who chose it.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Become aware of differences in opinions,
- Identify our expectations for life and what positive things we bring to the world,
- Debate and argue our positions,
- Listen to others with respect.

Section :	Scouts/Guides, Rovers
Time :	between 1 and 1.5 hours
Number :	10 participants per leader
Material :	A room that can be put in complete darkness, a candle
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

All participants sit down next to each other in a completely dark room. A candle is placed at the centre of the group.

The leaders start telling a story in which all participants are involved:

The group is visiting a cave when suddenly, part of the cave collapses: there you are, completely stuck, a few hundred meters under the ground. You have one chance to get out of there: you have located an in-draught! There must therefore be an exit. To find it, you all decide to walk in a single line as you cannot see anything. But there is one problem: there's no guarantee that there won't be anymore collapsing of the cave. The people at the front of the line will therefore have more chances of surviving. Of course, everyone wants to be at the front.

All the participants must decide together who will be standing where in the line.

In turn, each participant explains why they wish to remain alive. There can be two types of reasons:

- Why each individual wishes to live: what important things they still need to learn about life, what they still wish to get out of it.
- Each person's contribution to the world's fate: What each person will bring to others to help them live better.

Both types of reasons equally valuable: What people want to get out of life for their own well being is as important as what they wish to do for others.

Participants are free to refrain from giving an opinion but they must then accept the place that they will be allocated.

Advice for the debriefing of this activity

The leaders can ask the participants to give their opinion on the activity, if they have found it hard and why, if everyone has participated...

You can also start a discussion about the link between this activity and the values of each person in the group.

Advice to the leader

Mutual trust is an essential pre-requisite for this activity. Avoid organising it if you can sense tensions within the group as it would bring "scapegoats" to the fore.

This experience usually causes strong emotional reactions.

Some participants might have a tendency to attack each other and to vehemently criticise others' choices. It is crucial that the participants' are reminded to respect freedom of speech, tolerance, sensitivities and mutual acceptance.

It is essential to avoid any judgement.

Before proceeding with the evaluation, it is important to remind the group that this was only a game and that all participants should now leave their character behind.

During the discussion, all participants should be given the opportunity to express their feelings before starting any analysis of the activity.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop our self-knowledge, sense how others perceive us,
- Express our emotions,
- Respect silence.

Section : Rovers**Time :** 15 to 20 minutes**Number :** Any**Material :** -**Type :** Indoors**Activity guidelines**

This activity is completely silent (Only the leader will give a couple of instructions). The group sits down comfortably in a circle.

Everyone shuts their eyes and opens them after a few seconds following the instructions of the leader.

Each participant then tries to capture and hold the gaze of another participant.

Participants may choose not to persevere, they can simply close their eyes and start again with someone else. They can return to the first person a bit later in the exercise.

The activity stops after about 10 minutes.

It can be interesting to organise a group discussion on how people felt.

Comments

The interest of this activity resides in its length (approximately 10 minutes).

In fact, the relation between individuals will noticeably change through those 10 minutes: the eyes are able to carry and transmit a lot of information!

This activity might not necessarily be easy for everyone as it can be quite intimidating.

It is therefore recommended to organise it with a close group, or with a group of participants that are open to this type of experiment.

It is even possible that one or several participants decide to move out of the circle: this can help sustain the discussion after the activity!

Spiritual development objectives:

- Realise that our way of thinking is not necessarily open in all situations,
- Become aware that effective communication with others often requires going beyond the scope of our own references.

Section : Cub Scouts, Scouts/Guides, Rovers

Time : 20 minutes, or more depending on the group

Number : Any

Material : Paper and pens

Type : Indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

Ask all participants to draw 9 dots on a piece of paper, or in the sand, earth, etc...

The dots must be arranged in the shape of a square; 3 dots long by 3 dots wide.

The leader can now challenge the participants to link the 9 dots with 4 straight lines without lifting their pen.

Once the children have made several unsuccessful attempts, you can give them the following clue:

"To succeed, you need to open your mind to new ideas, get rid of the limits unconsciously imposed by your mind"... "And why not get out of the square?".

Once the solution is found, it is essential to draw some conclusions with the group (that is where the interest of this activity lies).

Comments:

Before sharing the solution with everyone, it is preferable to wait until all those who really wish to find the solution themselves have managed to do so (to give everyone the satisfaction of having solved the puzzle).

This amusing activity can be used, for example, when you notice a lack of empathy or openness in the group.

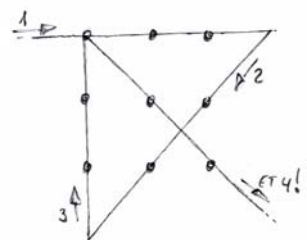
It illustrates a way of operating that we all tend to adopt: presenting ourselves with boundaries and not being able to think past them.

It is usually quite difficult to spontaneously explore new situations with an open mind. We all tend to look at the reality from our own perspective which does not always allow for an open minded approach.

Adopting a different way of thinking in order to get a little closer to others requires some awareness and a learning process.



Solution:



Spiritual development objectives:

- Structure one's value system,
- Express one's feelings,
- Develop one's ability to listen to others.

Section :	Rovers
Time :	30 minutes
Number :	from 6 to 20 participants
Material :	a punchy text, adapted to the needs of the group
Type :	indoors or outdoors

Activity guidelines

At an appropriate moment, the leader (or one of the participants) reads a text that had a great impact on them.

All participants receive a copy of the text and take a few minutes to read and absorb it.

If the text was well chosen, a relaxed and informal discussion can take place about what each person felt whilst reading this text, their opinion on the subject, etc.

Naturally, only the ones who wish to do so will speak: this is not an oral examination!

Testimony

"I was invited twice to take part in this activity in two very different circumstances. The first time we experienced the perfect example of a missed "SPI moment"! The chosen text lacked originality: it dealt with a very common issue which had lost its interest. Moreover, it was very far from the group's current preoccupations. As a consequence, the activity never took off and everyone got bored. When it was their turn to speak, participants would formulate a general comment, without having given it any personal thought.

The second time however, it brought me so much that I'll never forget it! The text was powerful and fully relevant to the group and its needs at the time. The debate started immediately, lively and rich. Ideas bursting forth from all directions... Far from the formal, boring and long process of my first experience!"

Laurent G., Leader

Following, is the text used during the second activity described above.

The three sieves

One day, a man comes to see Socrates and says:

- Listen to me Socrates, I need to tell you how your friend behaved ...
- Stop there! interrupted the wise man. Have you put what you have heard through the three sieves before you tell it to me?
- Sieves? says the man, looking surprised.
- Yes my friend, three sieves. Let's first check that what you have to tell me can go through the three sieves. The first sieve is called **Truth**. Have you checked that what you wish to tell me is true?"
- No, I've heard someone saying that ...
- Well, well. Surely you have passed it through the second sieve — **Kindness**. If what you wish to tell me is not totally true, is it at least kind?"

- The man hesitates and says: No, it is not kind, on the contrary...
- Now, let's try using the third sieve — **Necessity** – and see if it is necessary to tell me what you wish to tell me?"
- Necessary? No, not exactly.
- Well, then! says Socrates, smiling, if what you wish to say is neither true, nor kind, nor necessary, I would rather not hear it and I would advise that you forget about it...

Unknown author

This text was distributed to a very united group with a tendency to use teasing and gossiping as a way of reinforcing their identity. Some members of the group however realised that new comers found it hard to find their place among them, to the extent of often running away from the group... with the risk that the group would eventually become fossilized.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Get to know our values by studying our reactions towards the characters of a story,
- Become aware of our behaviour,
- Listen to others with respect.

Section :	Cub Scouts, Scout-Guides, Rovers (please adapt the story according to the age group)
Time :	Between 1 and 1.5 hours
Number :	Any
Material :	-
Type :	indoors

Activity guidelines

Distribute the following story to the participants:

The alligator river

Once upon a time, there was a lady called Alice. Her lover was called Nicholas and lived on the banks of a river. Alice lived on the other side of this river but it was infested with ferocious alligators and the bridge which once linked the two banks had been destroyed. Alice would have done anything to be with Nicholas. One day, Alice got an idea: she went to fetch Simon who owned a beautiful boat and asked him to help her cross the river.

Simon accepted with one condition: Alice must be his for one night! Alice refused without any hesitation and ran to her best friend Frank to tell him everything. But Frank did not want to get involved in a village argument and refused to help her. Desperate, Alice decided to accept Simon's offer. She spent the night with him and Simon took her to Nicholas.

When she was finally in the arms of the one she loved, Alice told him the whole story. Nicholas was very hurt and felt terribly sad. He left, ignoring Alice's presence. Her heart once again filled with sadness, Alice wandered until she met a man to whom she decided to tell him the whole story. This man felt sorry for Alice and decided to offer her revenge. He went to see Nicholas and settled score with him to the greatest joy of Alice.

Once the story is over, ask the participants to classify the characters, starting by the one whose behaviour seems the most shocking, the most horrible. The last person in the classification will be the one whose behaviour was the most acceptable.

Advice for this activity's debriefing

Once all participants have classified their characters, the leader can invite them to divide into small groups of 4 to discuss the reasons of their choices.

It is also possible to organise a discussion with the whole group to try and discover the values influencing the choices of the participants.

To get started with the analysis of the classification, the leader can ask the participants what they thought of the activity, if the classification exercise was hard and why.

Here are another few examples of questions:

“Which character would you like to resemble the least? Why?”

“How would you describe someone who is the complete opposite of the most shocking character?”

“Describe three actions that you do every day, which are totally unlike those of the worst character?”

“How do you explain that the characters can be classified in different ways?”

Advice to the leader

This experience usually causes strong emotional reactions. Some participants will tend to take it out on each other and strongly criticise others' choices.

It is important to draw the participants' attention to the freedom of speech, tolerance, sensitivities and mutual acceptance.

SPI Activity	A few activities to understand the law	Sheet - A42
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Spiritual development objectives:

- Develop one's value system,
- Understand the meaning of the Law.

Section :	All
Time :	May vary
Number :	Any
Material :	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. cameras 2. newspapers and magazines 3. photos picturing the Scout Law and the Scout Promise
Type :	indoors or outdoors, depending on the activity

Activity 1

Trust all the participants with a small camera during a few weeks and ask them to take photos illustrating the Law or the Promise.

Activity 2

Give a newspaper or a magazine to the participants (adapted to their age) and ask them to look for example of situations where the Scout Law is either respected or violated.

Activity 3

Select photos that seem to illustrate the Law and the Promise. Show them one by one to the participants asking them to link the photo with an aspect of the Law or the Promise.

Spiritual development objectives:

- Capture the Cub Scout Law by giving a meaning to its values,
- Live the Law in our everyday life,
- Structure one's value system,
- Express one's emotions, values and beliefs,
- Get to know others through their own values and beliefs.

Section : Cub Scouts**Time :** 2.5 hours + a campfire**Number :** from 12 to 30 participants**Material :** Whatever you need to prepare a nice and comfortable campfire site (+ wood and matches), a small stage or area for sketches, a good book with campfire songs and activities, costumes, make up, music, a bongo drum, pens and paper for the leaders**Type :** outdoors**Introduction**

The activity described below can be organised during a weekend or a summer camp, allowing for the work of the cub scouts to be presented during one of the evenings.

It can also be adapted to one single activity day. In this case, sketches will be presented at the end of the meeting.

However, do not force the children to play in front of their parents if there is a risk that they will be ashamed of the result!

Important note: This activity is based on the Belgian Cub Scout Law. Please adapt it to the text of your own Law.

Activity guidelines**Preparation of sketches (Total time : 2 hours 30 minutes)**

1. (15 minutes) During the afternoon, the leaders ask the children to divide into 3 groups to prepare 3 sketches illustrating the different points of the Law.

The cubs will present it during the campfire:

- Point 1: The Cub shares his joy with others
- Point 2: The Cub draws his strength from the pack,
- Point 3: The Cub follows his pursuits through to the end.

The Cubs can decide to join whichever group they want, depending on the topic they wish to work on. Should one of the groups be quite small, the leaders may join in to give them a hand. Each group will be supported by at least one leader.

2. (15 minutes) In small groups, The Cub scouts discuss the meaning of the aspect of the law which they will feature in their sketch. The leader guides the Cubs in their thoughts, answers their questions, manages the discussion, and ensures that everyone is able to take part equally in the activity. The leader will also take notes of the interrogations and doubts expressed by the Cubs. These notes could be used later as a base for further discussion with each participant.

3. (2 hours) Then, the group invents a short story which best illustrates the value behind the point of the Law which they have chosen. (Friendship, cooperation, perseverance...). The sketch could, for example, illustrate a situation in which the pack is facing a problem

and manages to solve it thanks to the values of the Law. Each sketch should last between 5 and 10 minutes. The objective is for each group to show the result of their reflection to the pack.

Inventing and playing a sketch is not an easy task. It can actually be quite a stressful experience! The role of the leader is to ensure that the presentation goes well and that the Cubs are satisfied and enjoy doing it. The Cubs must feel confident and proud of their achievement: do not overlook the scenery, costumes, make-up, accessories, music, etc. These tools can help enhance the simplest story!

The campfire (Timing will be up to you and the pack's motivation)

After dinner, the groups will do a final rehearsal of their sketches. Everyone puts on their costume, make-up... Meanwhile, two leaders prepare the setting around the campfire: they set up a stage, light torches, candles, make sure that everybody will be comfortable.

At sunset, the leaders located at the campfire use their bongo drum and some background music to call the pack. The 3 groups proceed towards the campfire with the remaining leaders. Once everyone is settled, the leader overseeing the campfire welcomes everyone and presents the Cub Scout Law.

He invites the first group to play their sketch (play some background music when the group is getting ready and when they leave the stage). At the end of the first sketch, the leader asks the following questions to the pack:

"What does sharing one's joy with others means?", "Why is it important?"

If nobody answers spontaneously, the leader must be able to manage a period of silence. The aim for the leader will be to remain "cool", to let things come into place without trying to fill the moments of silence: one cub will end up saying something. However, should this silence last for too long, the campfire leader may start one or two songs. He will then take the floor again and ask: "Who is now ready to say something?"

As soon as a silence occurs or the last comment has been made, the leader invites the next group to play their sketch, etc. It is preferable not to make the last two groups wait for too long. The stress of acting may stop some of the cubs from fully enjoying the evening.

Once all sketches have been played, the Cubs should be thanked for their performance and for sharing their values. This is an ideal time to talk about the Promise and to invite the ones who wish to do so to present it in a few days time. Please allow enough time to explain properly what it is all about: an important step in a Cub's life, not to be confused with a painful and boring trap (Please refer to the text "A few words about the Promise", annexe of the activity sheet on the Scout Law). Reassure the Cubs by explaining how the Promise will take place. i.e. : "We will of course help you preparing your promise. Tomorrow morning, we will organise a short meeting with each of you to be able to discuss it together..."

Once all questions about the Law and the Promise have been answered, you may proceed with the campfire activity or conclude with a few songs.

Comments

The leader's mission will be to ensure that all members make their Promise.

The notes taken during the activity on Law will be very useful to individually guide each one of the Cubs in their commitment. If the children wish to personalise their Promise with a short text, the leaders will be able to help them, for example, using the values expressed in the Law.

Before inviting the cubs to share their thoughts, it is important to remind the pack that they should respect everything that will be said: it is not acceptable to run down or make fun of anybody! As a consequence, when a cub has finished expressing himself, the leader should not be saying:

"Do you all agree?", but rather: "does anybody wish to ask a question in order to better understand what someone else has said?", "Does anybody wish to say something about the value illustrated in another person's speech?"

Spiritual development objectives:

- Capture the Scout Law by giving a meaning to its values,
- Live the Law in our everyday life,
- Structure one's value system,
- Express one's emotions, values and beliefs,
- Get to know others through their own values and beliefs.

Section : Scouts/Guides, Rovers (**but also, leaders and managers**)

Time : 2 hours + campfire

Number : from 12 to 30 participants

Material : Chapatti ingredients, prepare a nice a comfortable campfire area, a modern song-book (songs that make a change from the usual traditional ones, but that are known to most people), material to make tam-tams (jerry cans, plastic boxes), pens and paper + a tea light candle and the written instructions for each participant, a special place (at the top of a small hill, in a nearby forest clearing,...or any nice place unknown to the group)

Type : outdoors

Introduction

The aim of this activity is to enable young people to understand, capture and experience the values proposed by the Scout Law in their everyday life.

The fact that they have previously experienced various aspects of the Law within their group will make this exercise even more relevant to them.

As leaders, ask yourself the following question: did you introduce the values of the Law in your activities. For example: do you insist on respecting the environment? Do you look for solutions when one young person is rejected by others? Do you encourage cooperation?

It might be necessary to organise a short reflection on the text of the Law with your team before organising this activity with your group. This sheet can also serve as a guide for your personal reflection.

Part of the following activity will take place during the evening. It can therefore be organised during a weekend or a summer camp.

The first part, however, can take place at anytime in the afternoon and can therefore fit between other activities.

Activity guidelines1. Campfire preparation (1 hour)

Some time during the afternoon, the leader asks the group to divide into three small groups to prepare the campfire activities.

Young people can join whichever group they want depending on what they wish to do.

The smallest group can be supplemented by a few leaders if necessary.

The three tasks are as follows:

- One group prepares chapattis (these might need to be pre-cooked)
- The second group will prepare the campfire area (it needs to be comfortable, with the fire ready to go, a reserve of wood,...an atmospheric setting can be arranged)

- The last group will prepare a list of songs which they wish to sing with the others (preferably modern songs or songs with lyrics rather than typical scout songs): know how to start the songs, rehearse the least known songs, propose a copy of the texts for everyone if necessary, etc.

2. Individual reflections (50 minutes)

- (15 minutes) After dinner, young people walk to the special or mysterious place, lead by the sound of bongo drums. The leaders will have decorated it with torch lights, drapes and candles. Once everyone has arrived, each person is given a candle (which they light up), a pen and an instruction sheet (See appendix). Each participant will find themselves a quiet spot and will be asked to rejoin the tam-tam area, with a piece of wood, as soon as they hear the beat of drums.
- (20 minutes) participants remain alone for about 20 minutes to think about the Law (please refer to the instruction page). It is important that leaders walk from scout to scout and try to answer any questions they may have!
- (10 minutes) When the 20 minutes are over, one leader starts playing the bongo drums again and the scouts rejoin the central point. Each time a person reaches the central meeting point, they start playing on the drums with the others using their own piece of wood until everyone is playing together.

(10 minutes) Once everyone is back, the material is gathered, and each participant carefully puts away their sheet of paper in their pocket. The "fire" group is sent to the campfire area to get the fire started. They are joined two minutes later by the "chapatti" group and finally by the "singing" group. The groups go one by one to avoid having the solemn atmosphere replaced with chaos.

3. The campfire (the length of this activity will depend on the size of the group and the discussion times)

Once the group has gathered around the campfire site, the leaders will start to coordinate the evening (one leader will manage the discussions, another one will take notes of what the scouts say, what they don't understand or the questions they have).

The leaders will ask the "singing" group to start one or two songs to get the evening underway.

Then, the leader in charge of managing discussions asks if anybody wants to share their thoughts about the point of the Law which speaks to them and guides them the most. Do not expect a spontaneous reaction as it can be quite an intimidating exercise. The leader must therefore be ready to manage a moment of silence.

The aim for the leader will be to remain "cool", allowing things to slowly come into place, without absolutely wanting to fill in blank moments: someone will end up saying something at some point.

However, should this silence last for too long, the campfire leader may continue with one or two songs. He will then take the floor again and ask: "Who is now ready to say something?", and so on... (As soon as a blank moment occurs or once everyone has finished talking, the leader will request another song to be started).

After the second or third round of thought sharing, the "chapatti" group can organise a first distribution. The discussions should only resume once the distribution is over!

At the end of the campfire activities, one leader will close the evening (i.e. by thanking the group for sharing their values) and make a short conclusion.

This is an ideal time to talk about the Promise and to invite the ones who wish to do so to present it in a few days time (The notes taken during the activity will be very useful to individually guide each one of the scouts in their commitment).

Here is one way of concluding the activity:

"We would like to thank all of you for this sharing experience. The values we talked about are the values of Scouts from all around the world. As we too are Scouts, we need to try and live them as best as we can. I would therefore like to invite all those who want to make their Promise (reassure young people by explaining what it's all about, please refer to the

appendix provided hereafter). We will of course be there to help you through this essential step. Tomorrow morning, we will organise a short meeting with each of you to be able to discuss it together...".

The leader's mission will be to ensure that all members make their Promise.

Comments

Before inviting young people to share their thoughts, it is important to remind the group that they should respect everything that will be said, so that different ideas are discussed in a fair way: it is not acceptable to run down or make fun of anybody!

As a consequence, when a scout has finished expressing themselves, the leader should not be saying: "Do you all agree?", but rather: "does anybody wish to ask a question in order to better understand what someone else has said?", "Does anybody wish to say something about the value illustrated in another person's speech?"

If some of the Law's values are not usually experienced within the group, one of the participants might point it out during the discussions: "I personally find this value very important but I feel that it is not applied within our group". Use such remarks to move the discussion forward asking the group what could be done to introduce this value.

Variation

On the instruction sheet (see appendices), instead of asking the group for "the point of THIER Law that means and guides them the most", it is also possible to ask for "the value which they understand the least" or "the value which they experience the least because it requires too much effort" or "the value which they experience the least because they do not believe in it".

Appendices

- The instruction sheet
- What is the use of the Law?
- A few words about the Promise

The Scout Law (in SGP, Belgium) invites young people and leaders to experience the following points:

(Please adapt this sheet, using the Law of your national Scout association)

The Guide, the Scout...

- *says the truth and can be trusted*
- *respects others and their convictions*
- *is helpful*
- *works as a team and is friendly*
- *is polite*
- *loves and protects nature*
- *is able to obey*
- *likes making efforts and does not like half-done jobs*
- *respects the work and well-being of others*
- *controls his words, actions and thoughts*

1. Which points best illustrate your life style, things you believe in, your value system...?
2. Which of the remaining ones would you re-write (making small changes, clarifications, using other words) to make them reflect what you believe in?
3. You now have the 10 points of YOUR LAW. These should express what you believe in and what is valuable to you:

-
-
-
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-

Later on, around the campfire, you will be given the opportunity to share with the group the point from YOUR LAW that means and guides you the most.

What is the use of the law?

Presenting a Law is like giving the rules of a game.

The rules of the Scout game are presented in **the Law**. Why is it so important?

First of all, learning to accept rules and to respect them is learning to become a citizen.

Secondly and most importantly, because the Scout Law adds a dimension of values to the game: it represents an ideal to be reached and sits at the heart of the basic principles of Scouting.

The Law is a text that provides a moral framework to the life of the group and guides our actions (inside and outside the group).

As you probably know, the value system within the Law is progressive according to the age of the scout: the text of the Law has not been written in the same way for Cub Scouts and for Rovers.

These values need to be understood and experienced by the individuals, whatever their age.

To be useful, the text of the law must be self-explanatory: young people need to capture its meaning and take the time to think about it.

It would therefore be absurd to think that the words of the Law are sacred, that they cannot be changed and that it must be learnt by heart.

As a consequence, the law is also an educational tool: the role of the leader is to accompany each scout in the development of their own value system, which will guide their actions.

It is therefore based on this text that the scout will express their commitment towards themselves and the group: their **Promise**.

A few words on the Promise...

If on one hand, the Law allows the life of the group to be regulated by stating the "rules of the game", the Promise on the other hand constitutes a personal commitment of the scout towards themselves in front of their comrades.

Contrary to the Law which refers to an "Ideal", the scout's commitment is based on personal objectives which they will try to fulfil.

Making our Promise is therefore not about formally committing to a sudden impeccable behaviour. The Promise is about trying and doing the best we can to live the Law. The Promise is a major event in a Scout's life, as it is the first step towards the assertion of their values.

Moreover, the Promise is a founder and universal pillar of Scouting. It is therefore the leader's obligation to present it to his group, giving it the meaning and importance that it deserves.

The process which we (at SGP, Belgium) wish to develop for the education of values is divided into three phases:

1. **Present** the values of Scouting to the scouts,

2. Then, allow them to **experience** these values, get into a **thinking** process and develop their **understanding**.

3. Last but not least, offer the possibility to these scouts to **commit** themselves personally with regards to these values: they will, from there onwards, try to live them in their everyday life, simply because it is their own belief.

There lies the essence of spiritual development

The activity on Law presented in this tool will allow for a reflection exercise adapted to the scout, so that they can truly capture the Scout Law by giving some meaning to the values it carries.

At this stage, it is time to invite your scouts to commit themselves personally in front of the group!

How to proceed?

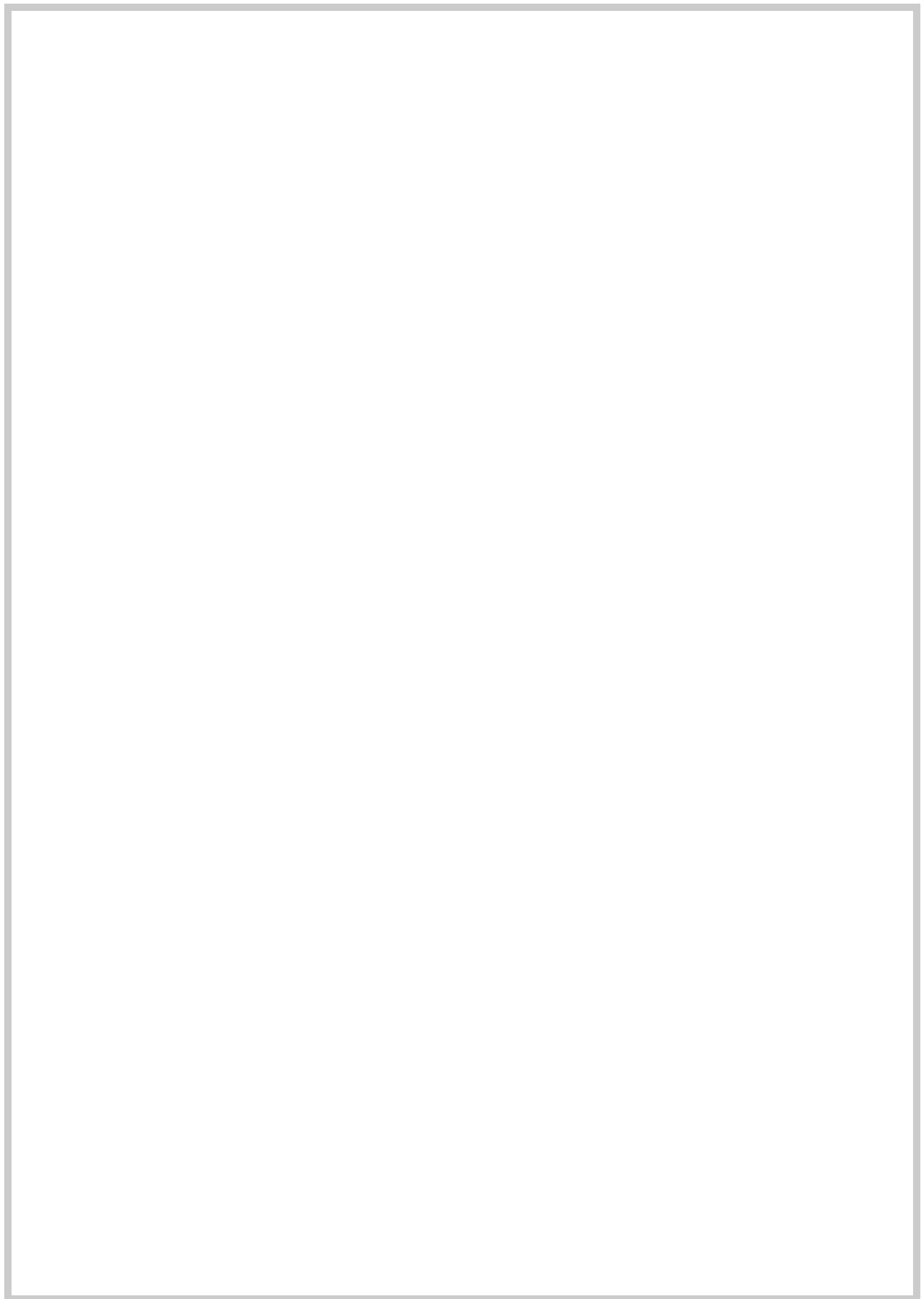
Explain to your group what is the Promise, what does it represent, and why is this commitment so important (much more important than a totem ceremony for example).

Reassure the scouts about their commitment: it is not about signing a contract with a penalty clause! There will be no good or bad marks: it is not a pressure tool. It is a commitment made in front of others – it's true - but mainly for the scouts themselves.

The ceremony of the Promise

It is important but it should not be the sole objective: it's the 'cherry on the cake', the party which will make this moment unforgettable.

However, the most important part of this process lies in the reflection of the scouts and their everyday experience of the Law. The ceremony, as beautiful as it can be, will have no meaning if this thinking process has not taken place before, during...and long after!



Texts and quotes

To be used as a base for reflection
and exchanges.



Love, wealth and success

A woman came out of her house and saw 3 old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them.

She said "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat".

"Is the man of the house home?" they asked. "No", she said. "He's out".

"Then we cannot come in", they replied.

In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what had happened. Go tell them I am home and invite them in.

The woman went out and invited the men in.

"We don't go into a house together", they replied.

"Why is that?" she wanted to know.

One of the old men explained: "His name is Wealth" he said pointing to one of his friends and said pointing to another one, "He is Success and I am Love". Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The woman went in and told her husband what was said. Her husband was overjoyed. "How nice", he said!

"Since that is the case, let us invite Wealth. Let him come and fill our home with wealth".

His wife disagreed. "My dear, why don't we invite Success"?

Their daughter-in-law was listening from the other corner of the house. She jumped in with her own suggestion: "Would it not be better to invite Love. Our home will be filled with love?"

"Let us follow our daughter-in-law's advice", said the husband to his wife. "Go out and invite Love to be our guest."

The woman went out and asked the 3 old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest."

Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other 2 also got up and followed him.

Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, why are you coming in?"

The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success the other two of us would've stayed outside, but since you invited Love, wherever he goes we go with him.

Wherever there is Love there is also wealth and success!"

(Christian text)

Unknown

Here was unknown in my sky,
But I didn't know,
My sky
Was above my roofs
And my stars
I knew them all,
So I thought.
But you, the stranger,
You told me about other roofs, other skies,
You showed me others stars
And a country with no borders
That I didn't know.

There was unknown in my land,
But I didn't know,
My gardens were covered
With apple trees and blueberries.
But you, the stranger,
You planted on my land
Palm flowers
And olive trees.
There was strength in my land
That I didn't know.

There was unknown in my language,
But I didn't know,
My language sang
In its own slang and dialects.
But you, the stranger,
You brought me other words,
Other phrases
And you taught me songs
That I didn't know.

There was unknown in my skin,
But I didn't know,
You filled my street
Whit unknown colours,
From ebony black to sandy yellow.
And you, the stranger,
You opened up new colourful horizons
And amazing lands
That I didn't know.

There were so many people at my door,
There was you,
There were others,
There was God,
But I didn't know!

Barber shop... (The existence of god)

A man went to a barber shop to have his hair and his beard cut as always. He started to have a good conversation with the barber who attended him. They talked about many things and various subjects.

Suddenly, they touched the subject of God. The barber said: "Look, I don't believe that God exists like you say."

"Why do you say that?" asked the customer.

"Well, it's so easy, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God does not exist. Tell me, if God existed, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. If there was a God, he wouldn't permit all of these things."

The customer stopped for a moment thinking, but he didn't want to respond and provoke an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer went out of the shop. Just after he left the barber shop he saw a man in the street with long hair and a beard. He looked so untidy, it seemed that it had been a long time since he had his hair cut. Then the customer went back into the barber shop and said to the barber, "You know what? Barbers do not exist."

"What do you mean, barbers don't exist?" asked the barber. "I'm here and I'm a barber."

"No!" the customer exclaimed. "They don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with long hair and a beard like that man outside in the street."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist, it's just that some people don't come to me."

"Exactly!" affirmed the customer. "That's the point. God does exist; what happens is that people don't go to Him and don't look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."

(Muslim text)

Fishing story...

The businessman was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The businessman complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them. The Mexican replied only a little while.

The businessman then asked why he didn't stay out longer and catch more fish. The Mexican said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs. The businessman then asked, "but what do you do with the rest of your time?". The Mexican fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos; I have a full and busy life, señor."

The businessman scoffed, "I could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats; eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you would sell directly to the processor and eventually open your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to the city where you would run your expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked, "But señor, how long will this all take?" To which the businessman replied, "15-20 years." "But what then, señor?" The businessman laughed and said, "That's the best part! When the time is right you would sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions." "Millions, señor? Then what?" The businessman said, "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos."

The fisherman, still smiling, looked up and said, "Isn't that what I'm doing right now?"

(Author Unknown)

If...

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run -
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more -

You'll be a Man my son!

(If, a poem by Rudyard KIPLING)

A Butterfly's lesson

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared in it, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no further. So the man decided to help the butterfly: he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon.

The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shrivelled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shrivelled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were his Creator's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If our Creator allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly.

I asked for Strength, and my Creator gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for Wisdom, and my Creator gave me problems to solve.

I asked for Prosperity, and my Creator gave me brain and brawn to work.

I asked for Courage, and my Creator gave me danger to overcome.

I asked for Love, and my Creator gave me troubled people to help.

I asked for Favours, and my Creator gave me opportunities.

I received nothing I wanted, but I received everything I needed.

Xisel's encounter

Xisel stepped back in horror. The creature was grotesque. Very small, it measured less than a third of his size. It was standing vertically, on two articulated limbs, which it used to move around. It had two other limbs sticking out of its sides and ending with 5 small sticks at their extremities.

These "sticks" could fold to grab objects, like the bag which the creature was holding at that time. At the top of its body, there was a head with several holes, hidden inside a helmet with a semi-transparent window. The bottom hole was constantly moving when the creature was addressing him using the translating microphone.

Xisel was not surprised; he had been told that these creatures expressed themselves by making sounds. The top of the head was by far the ugliest part of these creatures as it was half covered with dark hair.

Xisel knew, as he had been told before, that the rest of the body was protected by a space suit. He wondered if the rest of the body was as hairy as the top of the head and made a face of disgust at the thought of all this hair.

The creature was truly hideous, but Xisel managed to control himself. He was there to make the first steps of a successful exchange with another form of intelligence. It was the first human he met.

The value of a human being

A bar of raw iron can be worth 10 €. If you make a horseshoe from it, the value increases to 20 €; sewing needles, 800 €; springs for Swiss watches, 10,000 €... The value of things depends on what you do with them.

Do you know what a human body is made of? Enough fat to make a kilo of soap; enough iron to make a standard size nail; enough sugar to sweeten 16 portions of cereal; enough acid to clean a scruffy bath tub; enough phosphorus to put on the end of 2000 match sticks, a pinch of magnesium, potassium and sulphur... adding up to a total of approximately 8 €.

Is this the true value of a human being? Whatever the abilities of a human being, its value is priceless and it deserves to be loved.

Time waits for no one

To understand the value of a year, ask the student who failed his exams.

To understand the value of a month, ask a mother who gave birth too early to her child.

To understand the value of a week, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.

To understand the value of an hour, ask the engaged couple waiting to be together.

To understand the value of a minute, ask someone who missed their train, bus or plane.

To understand the value of a second, ask someone who lost a friend in an accident.

To understand the value of a thousandth of a second, ask the athlete who won a silver medal in the Olympic Games.

Time waits for no one. Gather all moments you have left and they will be of great value.

Share these moments with another person, and they will become even more precious.

The Others

The "Others", as we call them...
They are never You or Me,
The others are Him and Her!
It is not wrong to say:
This one is fat, that one is skinny,
He is yellow, white or black...
One is mute, the other one deaf,
Or poor...
Sikh, Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant,
Hindu, Jew or Muslim,
They are all very different... And yet,
Look at them carefully:
Like you, they are made of flesh and blood
They laugh, they cry,
They live, they die.
The words speak for themselves...
They are probably quite familiar to you,
Those "Others" – Them, Him and Her!
Because, deep in our hearts,
We are all brothers and sisters.
To the people who you come across
Offer a smile and your friendship,
Take the time to get to know them,
Before treating them like traitors!

(Carol Baker)

The essential...

The essential is hidden
It is never mentioned on television
Or even at school.

The essential is not glamorous
It does not get any applause
It is not unanimously approved.

The essential is not obvious
We easily get distracted from it.
The essential is often disturbing.

The essential is free
It cannot be reserved
It cannot be haggled over.

The essential is the most fragile,
The most threatened and the most vulnerable thing there is.

The essential is difficult
It is totally understandable to children.
The child I used to be
Knew as much as I do about the essential.

Happy are those who are persecuted
Because of the essential.

Fight (against) yourself

You found your worst enemy.

He looks like you.

He has all your faults.

But also all your qualities.

It is yourself.

You have always had conflicts with yourself.

Now is the time to face them.

You cannot run away from yourself,

Fight with a sword, or have more spirit.

He offers you to play cards.

You sit down at a table, facing each other.

He holds cards similar to yours.

Images of your past replace the usual figures.

He looks at his fan-shaped cards with a greedy eye and slowly chooses one

He lays it facing up on the table.

You see a painful memory which you had tried so hard to forget.

It is your turn to turn a card over.

He understands that you are searching in the nicer times of your life and counter attacks with stronger cards.

You need to now choose your worst memories.

Lay yourself bare.

He is now also forced to lay bare, to outbid you.

Be strong with yourself.

Dig out the cards representing your weaknesses, your fears, ingratitude, your lack of attention to the suffering of others, your laziness, and your treachery.

Give him the full view of your deepest wounds, until he can counter you no more.

He is embarrassed by the liberated eyes that you manage to lay on yourself.

He overturns the table, throwing the game on the floor.

You hold on to his hand, offer to be his friend in the future and to do nothing without a full agreement between you and yourself.

He accepts.

Enough fighting.

(Werber B., *Le Livre du Voyage*, pp. 114-116)

It hurts inside!

Life, it's like a tooth
First, you don't really think about it
You just chew
Then suddenly, it flares up
It really hurts, and you want to keep it
And you nurse it and you worry
And to be definitely cured
They must rip it out, your life.

(Translation of the Poem "La vie, c'est comme une dent" by the French author Boris Vian)

Words!

There are words and words...

There are the people who "accuse"

And those who "talk".

Those who chat don't run much risk,

It flows like water from a tap.

But sometimes, words are forced out of us,

We are pushed to risk voicing out our opinion.

And that changes everything!

Taking the risk to talk means

Committing ourselves

Taking sides

Choosing a camp

Refusing to behave sheepishly,

Standing up for ourselves

Disputing

Fighting

To the point of risking our position,

To the point of risking our reputation,

To the point of putting our life at risk.

Meeting with a wise-man

Higher, in the middle of a great pile of rocks, you spot a waterfall, a mountain torrent.

Go forward.

Before us, the torrent tumbles down like a deafening curtain of crystal.

This enraged wall of water makes you hesitate.

However, I advise you to keep on moving forward.

You are now able to vaguely see a faint light behind the water of the torrent.

You cross the torrent and discover a cave.

You walk towards the source of light. There, at the far end, you find a man dressed in a beige loincloth, sitting on a rock in the position of the lotus.

He is motionless.

His nails are very long and he wears a beard, which must be several years old, as well as long white hair.

On his forehead, a red dot symbolises the third eye.

He is practically naked but does not seem to feel the cold

He must have been there for a very long time as his body seems to be fixed in this posture.

You get nearer.

He comes out of his meditation.

He slowly opens his eyes.

He sees you and you see him.

You ask him the question that you've always been longing to ask:

"What is the meaning of life?"

He looks into your eyes with a grave expression on his face.

He consents to give you some of his attention.

He consents to answer you.

And finally says, "Life is nothing but an illusion".

You think about his answer.

And you say to him:

"No, sorry, life is not an illusion."

He raises his eyebrows.

You tell him he should travel more, instead of staying locked up in his cave.

There are people out there who have a hold on things.

He sees everything through the opaque curtain of the torrent.

And that is why he believes that life is only an illusion.

You tell him that it is the same as observing the world through the screen of a television.

He asks you what a television is.

You tell him about the stereotyped soap operas with their pre-recorded laughs, advertising throwing their slogans a thousand times at you, talk-shows where people come to make a show of their personal problems...

The wise man seems more and more interested by what you have to say and moves towards you.

You tell him that you are actually quite happy with your ignorance as it is what drives you forward.

Doubt and curiosity are stronger than beliefs and knowledge.

It is thanks to them that you were able to come here.

You tell him that you are trying to empty yourself in order to be filled with the things that you discover.

He adopts a dazed look.

He restrains a grimace, then, having reached the limit of his patience, calls you an "imbecile".

Let him know that is exactly how you feel,

but in the real etymological sense of the word.

In the past, "im-bécille" meant "without crutches".

An imbecile is someone who has no support, no walking stick, no crutches to stand up right.

He stumbles but, at least, he moves forward and by himself.

"Imbecile": is actually the best compliment you could receive.

He looks at you with a different eye.

At this precise moment, dear reader, you know that nobody will ever be able to discover the world and the universe better than you.

You and no one else.

You do not need a wise man, you do not need a professional philosopher, you do not need a "good adviser" or any of those hypocrites who spread their mind because, in fact,

They are unable to let it take off.

You need no god or master.

You do not even need me, "The book of travels", because your path is unique and you are the only one able to direct it.

(Translation of an extract from the book « *Le Livre du Voyage* », Werber B., pages 56 to 61)

If the drop said...

If the stone said:

There's no stone

That can build a wall...

There would be no houses.

If the drop said:

A water drop

Doesn't make a river...

There would be no oceans.

If the seed said:

It's not a seed

That cultivates a field...

There would be no harvests.

If man says:

It's not an act of love

That will save mankind...

There will never be justice, peace, dignity

And happiness on Earth.

(Christian text)

If the world...

If the world was a village of 1'000 people,

Its population would include

60 North Americans,
80 South Americans,
86 Africans,
210 Europeans,
564 Asians...

If the world was a village of 1'000 people,

700 people would not be white,
60 people would own half of the village's wealth,
500 people would not have enough food,
600 people would live in the poorest area
700 people would be illiterate...

If this village was our village,

Would we want to change this situation?

Well, this village is in fact our village,

As it reflects our World.

Tantra luck

Give people more than they expect and do it cheerfully.

Do not believe all you hear, spend all you have or sleep all you want.

When you say, "I'm sorry", look the person in the eye.

Never laugh at anyone's dreams. Someone who never dreams is a poor person.

Don't judge people by their relatives.

Talk slowly but think quickly.

When someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, smile and ask, "Why do you want to know?"

When you lose, at least don't lose the lesson.

Remember the three R's: Respect for self; Respect for others; Responsibility for all your actions.

Do not let a little dispute injure a great friendship.

When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.

Spend some time alone.

(Hindu text)

Note:

Tantrism is a form of Hinduism. It is a religion based on esoteric Buddhist Tantras (sacred Buddhist books) whose worshipers venerate feminine divinities.

Living responsibly

If you slow down, they stop,
If you weaken, they give up
If you sit down, they lie down
If you doubt, they lose hope
If you criticise, they tear to pieces.

But,

If you walk in front, they'll overtake you,
If you give your hand, they'll give you their life, and
If you meditate, then they'll become wise men.
If you walk straight ahead, your scouts will follow you.
If you are confident, they'll trust you
If you hesitate, they'll lose their head.

If you show signs of fear, they'll panic.
If you raise your voice, they'll shout.
If you roll a stone, they'll tip up a rock.
If you break a branch, they'll bring the tree down.
If you hit, they'll slaughter.
If you hold out your hand to someone, they'll lift him up.
If you start a conflict, they'll declare war.

Going into mourning¹

A lady called Kisa Gotami lost her child. She carried her dead son to the Buddha. He tried to comfort her and told her that he could not bring her child back to life. The lady was inconsolable and so the Buddha entrusted her with a task: To bring him mustard seeds from a home where there had been no death. Kisa Gotami ran from house to house, but was unable to find a single home where death had not occurred. She eventually realised how simply the Buddha had taught her a most important lesson: that everything that is born must eventually die. She buried her son and stopped mourning his death.

(Translation of a Buddhist story)

A Thousand and one days²

One day, a novice asked to receive the teachings of a Sufi Master.

"You must first find the answer to one question, said one of the disciples.

If you answer correctly, the Master will welcome you as his student in three years time."

The disciple asked the question and after a long period of thought, the student managed to find the answer. The disciple brought the answer to the Sufi Master and came back with the following message:

"Your answer is correct. You may now leave and wait for a thousand and one days to pass; then, you may come back here to receive the Teachings."

The novice was delighted. Having thanked the messenger, he asked him:

"And what would have happened had I not found the correct answer?"

– Oh, in this case, you would have been introduced to the Sufi Master straight away!"

(Translation of a Sufi story)

¹ Source : MARCHANT K., *Le Bouddha et le bouddhisme*, Bonneuil-les Eaux : Editions Gamma, 2003

² Source : KHEMIR N., *Paroles d'Islam*, Paris : Albin Michel, 1994

Rich and Poor³

Famine and calamity gripped the land. Yet for that, not everyone was dying of hunger: the rich had stored away wheat, oil, dried vegetables, and meats. So the lady Khadija said to her husband:

- Nasr Eddin, the whole town considers you a wise man. Stop just sitting around with your arms crossed doing nothing; go to the town square, call the people together, and try to convince the rich to give the poor something to eat.

Nasr Eddin found that his wife was correct in her wisdom. He did as she said. Many hours later he returned home, his face radiant.

My wife, let us give thanks to Allah the Merciful!!

So you succeeded in your task?

It was not an easy mission, and I was only partially successful.

What do you mean that you were "partially successful"?

I have completely succeeded in convincing the poor of receiving something to eat!

(Nasr Eddin Hodja, character with a legendary humour and wisdom in many Arabic, Turkish and Persian stories)

³ Source : KHEMIR N., *Paroles d'Islam*, Paris : Albin Michel, 1994

I never complained⁴

I never lamented about the tribulations of time or complained of the turns of fortune except on the occasion when I was barefooted and unable to procure slippers.

But when I entered the great mosque of Kufah with a sore heart and beheld a man without feet I offered thanks to the bounty of God, consoled myself for my want of shoes.

(Saadi, The Golestan,
mystical Sufi poet, 13th century)

The lover⁵

A bashful lover knocked on the door of his beloved. She asked from behind the door:

"Who is it?"

He answered:

"It's me!"

She said:

"There isn't enough room for you and me in this house".

So the man left to meditate in the desert and came back a few years later to knock once more on the door. The voice of her beloved asked:

"Who is it?"

He answered:

"It is you!"

And she opened the door.

(Translation of a poem by Ibn' Arabī,
Andalousian poet, 1165 – 1240)

⁴ Source : <http://www.iranchamber.com>, translation by Richard Francis Burton, 1821-1890 CE

⁵ Source : KHEMIR N., *Paroles d'Islam*, Paris : Albin Michel, 1994

What is the Talmud?⁶

The Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg was sitting at his desk studying the sacred books. The morning sun was filtering through his window, projecting its golden light across the top of his wooden bookshelves and all over his leather bound volumes which covered all the walls of his bedroom.

As he was meditating on the meaning of the words unfolding before his eyes, he heard someone knock on his door.

"Who is it?" asked the rabbi, and he smiled when he heard the answer. It was his youngest daughter, Rachel, who was paying him a morning visit. Rabbi Meir turned around to welcome his daughter running into his arms.

Rachel was an astonishing child. She was clever and lively and showed early signs of wisdom. She learnt to read Hebrew and Aramaic all by herself – It was not usual for young girls to learn the Torah in those times.

She knew the prayers for all days of the week, the Shabbat and holy days. She could recite entire passages of the Torah from memory. But Rachel knew, like all children in her family, that the greatest difficulties laid in the study of the Talmud.

She wanted at all costs to study it with her father but girls scarcely had such opportunity.

Standing next to the chair of Rabbi Meir, she asked him: "Father, tell me, how can one learn the Talmud?"

In the peace of his study room, he answered:

"The Talmud is very difficult to learn. Not only is it necessary to read and memorise, but one must also think."

"Please, Father", begged Rachel, "let me try!"

"Very well, my dear daughter. I'll give you one lesson.

Now, listen carefully. Two men were working on a roof when they both fell down the chimney.

After their fall, one of them had a clean face and the other one a dirty face. Which one went to clean his face?"

Rachel started thinking. The dirty one of course.

Everybody washes their face when it's dirty, don't they?

But another idea suddenly crossed her mind and she said excitedly:

"I know, Father. It's the one with the clean face that went to wash himself!"

"And how do you know that is the right answer?" said Rabbi Meir.

Confident, Rachel answered:

"It is because when he saw his friend's dirty face, he thought he must be dirty himself. Whereas the one with the dirty face saw his friend's clean face and thought his must also be clean!"

Rabbi Meir smiled at his daughter:

"You are reasoning well my child, said the rabbi, but to learn the Talmud, you must think even further..."

"Why Father?"

"Because", said Meir caressing her hair, "If two men fall down a chimney, how is it possible that only one of them ends up with a dirty face?"

⁶ Source : JAFFE N. et ZEITLIN S., *Debout sur un pied*, Paris : L'école des loisirs, 1994

Rachel's face darkened when she heard the answer, but her father comforted her: "You did very well. Always look for the question behind the question. That is how we study the Talmud."

With this idea to meditate, Rachel went back to her daytime reading. Her Father, Rabbi Meir, the scholar, went back to study the difficult passage of the Talmud that he was looking at.

Quotes

A mind is like a parachute, it works best when open.

It requires sixty four muscles to raise your eyebrows... and only eighteen to smile.

Every stranger is a friend you haven't yet met.

Diversity is an asset for interbreeding and citizenship, against hatred, racism and all forms of discrimination.

Anonymous

You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.

Indira Gandhi, 1917-1984

How can we get to know ourselves better? Never through meditation but through concrete actions.

A prayer is not a request; it is an aspiration of the soul.

Owning goods for future use is a breach of faith. God gives us each day our daily bread.

Gandhi,
Indian politician and philosopher,
Hinduism. 1869-1948

We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.

Martin Luther King (1929 – 1968)

If the equality of sexes was recognised, it would make a great breach in human stupidity.

Louise Michel (1830 – 1905)

Mankind is not meant to build walls, it is meant to build bridges.

Lao-Tseu (-570 – -490)

Everywhere men have degraded women, they have degraded themselves.

Charles Fourier (1772 – 1837)

The sun does not ignore a village because it is too small.

One finger alone cannot pick up anything on Earth.

Stones are an integral part of the path.

A falling tree makes more noise than a growing forest.

The strength of a chain resides in its links.

Those you try to part you from others want to part you from yourself.

It takes an entire village to raise one child.

African sayings

We might not eat the same meal, but we look at the same sun.

Russian proverb

Uniformity equals death. Diversity equals life.

Mikhaïl Bakounine (1814 – 1876)

Neither fear nor hatred, this is our victory.

Albert Camus (1913 – 1960)

In life, nothing is to be feared, all is to be understood.

Marie Curie (1867 – 1934)

A prejudice is harder to break than an atom.

Albert Einstein (1879 – 1955)

A true wise man is a man that learns from everyone.

Persian proverbs

In each of us there is a little of all of us.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742 –1799)

Any country is my country, any man is my brother.

Indian proverbs

A candle does not lose any light when passing it on to another candle.

Japanese proverbs

If there were only one truth, it wouldn't be possible to do 100 variations on the same theme.

Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973)

It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees.

Dolorès Ibarruri (1895 – 1989)

We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our Children.

Antoine de St-Exupéry (1900 – 1944)

Those who do not understand the past are condemned to experience it once more.

Goethe (1749 – 1832)

Barbarism is like fire sleeping under ashes; it only takes a blow to revive it.

One can be clever all is life and stupid for one moment.

Chinese proverbs

A society starts declining when men ask themselves "What is going to happen?", instead of asking themselves "What can we do?"

Denis de Rougemont (1906 – 1985)

Wherever they burn books they will also, in the end, burn human beings.

Heinrich Heine (1797 – 1856)

You will never know what you are capable of until you try..

American proverb

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950)

Don't be concerned about others not knowing you, be concerned about you not knowing them.

What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others...

Confucius (v. 551 — v. 479 AC)

The heart bears witness to God's existence, not the intellect

Abu Bakr al Sabbak,
Muslim philosopher,
Islam, Soufisme

There can be no such thing as a "search for God", since God is everywhere.

Martin Buber, (1878 — 1965),
Israeli philosopher of Austrian origin,
Judaism, Hassidism

Peace does not come from the outside, it comes from the inside. It is something that should start within ourselves: we have the responsibility to grow our own inner peace to allow for general Peace.

Dalai Lama (1935-),
Buddhism, Mahayana

One should never look down on others or treat them scornfully. Even a worm should be considered to be worth our respect and consideration.

Guéshé Kelsang Gyatso,
20th century,
Buddhism, Mahayana

There is no better friend or relative than ourselves.

Jean de La Fontaine (1621 — 1695),
French writer

The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly - that is what each of us is here for.

Oscar Wilde (1854 — 1900),
Irish writer

All forms of wickedness are a result of weakness.

Seneca (v. 2 AC — 65 PC), philosopher,
leader of State and tragic roman author,
Stoicism

Nobody should tell me anything unpleasant about another person as I aspire to have a free mind when I meet someone.

The Prophet Mohammed



Religions and beliefs

Let's start with a few definitions...

What is a religion¹ ?

Islam, Catholicism, Judaism and Hinduism are all religions. But what exactly is a religion? It comes from the Latin word *religare* meaning "to link": we could say that religion **links human beings with gods**, or the earth with the sky, the **natural** – anything that can be scientifically explained – **with the supernatural**, anything that cannot be explained scientifically. It also links **human beings between themselves**, around the same beliefs, the same rituals, and the same philosophy.

A religion is a **system of beliefs** which gives an **ultimate meaning to existence**. Today, whilst many phenomena can be explained scientifically, there remain many unanswered questions: Why do we live? Why do we die? What is there after death? Why a world? Why suffering? To **Believe in a God** is to decide that it exists, without any scientific proof. It is therefore something that we think and feel inside of us.

The beliefs which constitute the basis of a religion are called **dogmas**, ideas that cannot be challenged. When put together, the dogmas form **a doctrine**. This doctrine is often revealed by **a prophet** (such as Jesus or Mohammed) considered as God's messenger. A religion is above all a message from the beyond, the word of God (or gods) to human beings. This word reveals the meaning and the direction to be given to life. Consequently, it is always linked to **morale standards**, differentiating good from evil and giving a definition of correct behaviours and sins.

Based on one or several myths about the origin of the world, the birth of mankind and life after death, all religions carry **a hope** which supports human beings through their unavoidable ordeals. More than a belief in specific propositions (I.e. *Jesus is the son of God*), religion leads to a commitment of the believer in **their faith** (A commitment which will of course vary in intensity). The believer must model their behaviour on a certain code of life and practise several rituals (such as going to church, going to confession, etc.)

Some believers tend to interpret the religious message literally, and consider it as a direct representation of reality (*God created the world in seven days*), whereas others consider it as a symbolic language, using images and parables to represent a deeper meaning which can be discovered when looking carefully into ourselves and into our faith. In both cases, the language expresses a form of faith that relates to the **sacred, mysteries** belonging to the beyond and to **a god who created and brought order the world**.

Adapted from: TREMBLAY R-R., *La Religion*, Montréal : <http://www.cvm.qc.ca/enceph/CONTENU/ARTICLES/RELIGION.HTM>, 1997
LOULIDI S. et al., *Des hommes et des religions*, Le Petit Ligeur n°48, 24/12/2003, p. 07

Testimonies

To have faith is, first of all, to “feel” the faith, as opposed to a cultural and family heritage or an old tradition. Everyone has it deep inside them and gets to discover it one day by pure coincidence.

I was raised in the strict religious tradition: I had religious lessons and took communion. But I never really was, strictly speaking, an “active follower”. I personally do not consider it important to go to church or to confess our sins. Having faith is simply to believe, without the need of any proof, that there is a superior presence, who keeps an eye on us without necessarily influencing our destiny. It all happens directly between us and this superior being. We can talk to “god” about anything, our joy and sorrow, our pain and anger... It could be seen as a conscience: close to us, invisible, and giving no answers other than the ones we already have.

Faith helps me to remain serene, to look for the meaning behind acts of injustice and to try to either put them right or accept them. It encourages me to help others, to “do good”, but sometimes it also makes me feel guilty, when – for one reason or the other - I have disregarded the values of goodwill, tolerance or respect which we all know about without necessarily applying them into our own lives.

It is up to each of us to find our OWN faith, the faith that suits us best and - most importantly - the faith which will benefit the people around us!

Florelle D.

Beware of sects ! ²

Sects gain ground in places where main religions loose their influence.

A sect is a fundamentalist and often fanatic religious group which “brainwashes” its **followers** to lead them to a lifestyle which is completely different from the rest of the society.

The world of sects is both varied and seducing. It includes the most incredible beliefs.

Some are convinced that their **guru**, the all mighty master, is a reincarnation of Jesus (*the Moon sect*), others believe that theirs has travelled through the galaxy and met with aliens (*raelians*), and others think that they hold amazing secrets (the sadly famous *Order of the Solar Temple*) or an infallible formula to reach mental balance (*the church of Scientology*).

Some of these groups predict the Apocalypse, a fast approaching worldwide cataclysm (*Jehovah's witnesses*).

These sects often take advantage of a difficult psychological period in an individual's life to use their influence.

They often financially exploit their followers and break all forms of communication with their family and friends.

¹ Adapted from : TREMBLAY R-R., *La Religion*, Montréal :

<http://www.cvm.qc.ca/encephi/CONTENU/ARTICLES/RELIGION.HTM>, 1997

LOULIDI S. et al., *Des hommes et des religions*, Le Petit Ligeur n°48, 24/12/2003, p. 07

COMMISSION D'ENQUETE PARLEMENTAIRE SUR LES SECTES, *Rapport d'enquête n° 2468 sur les sectes en France*, 22/12/1995

What is philosophy³ ?

Philosophy (from the Greek *philo-sophia*, the love for wisdom) is the investigation of knowledge, based on a critical and rational research. The word covers a radically new way of thinking, which first appeared in Greece, around 600 BC.

Before that, various religions would take care of answering all the questions raised by human beings: Where does the rain come from? And thunder? Who makes plants grow? How can the sun suddenly disappear during day time? The explanations – of religious nature – would be transferred from one generation to the other in the form of **myths** (Stories about gods which tend to explain natural and human phenomenon).

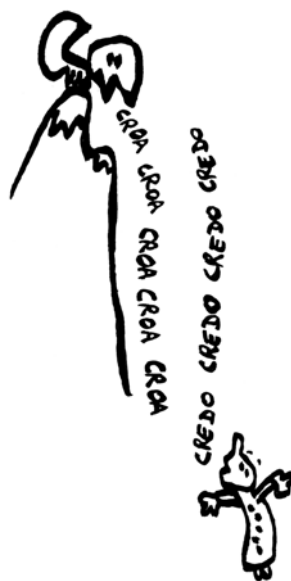
Greek philosophers tried to demonstrate why we should not trust those myths, and how we should instead, use our ability **to be astonished** and those of **research, reasoning** and **discussion**.

Philosophy provides the answer to the **metaphysical needs** of human beings, by creating an **interrogation**. But it is much easier to ask philosophical questions than to answer them. Each philosopher therefore offers his own answers to some of the main moral and existential questions: How was the world created? Is there a special meaning or will behind what happens? Is there life after death?

Great philosophers suggest reflection paths and sometimes develop **thinking systems**. Some also present their knowledge as a form of **wisdom**. In that sense, philosophy is a **personal belief**. But it must involve some **reasoning**, in other words, be continuously submitted to the **critical eye** of others. It can, in principle, be reviewed. It invites each of us to go to the personal process of finding truth.

Many philosophers believe in god, but not in a naive and blind way. Other philosophers are atheist: they consider religion to be a form of ideology which must be denounced. Others, finally, are **agnostic**, meaning that they refuse to believe or not believe in an unidentifiable being.

But all share a rational and critical attitude towards existential questions.



³ Adapted from: TREMBLAY R-R., *La Religion*, Montréal : <http://www.cvm.qc.ca/encephi/CONTENU/ARTICLES/RELIGION.HTM>, 1997
GAARDER J., *Sophie's world*, Paris : Seuil, 1995, p. 37

The main spiritual movements in Belgium

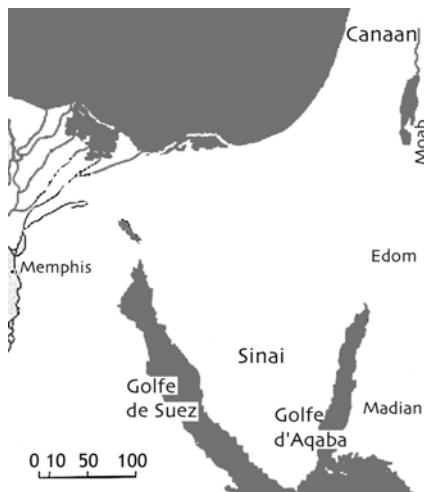
Judaism⁴

The history of Jews goes back 4000 years, which makes their religion the most **ancient monotheist religion** (faith in one god) in the world.

Jews are born Jews: traditionally, anyone who is the child of a Jewish woman is Jewish, no matter how much faith the mother has.

Nearly half of the 14 million Jews live in the USA, one quarter in **Israel** and the rest are scattered around the world.

The history of Jews goes back to the **Hebrews**, nomadic people who lived in the current Middle East around 2000 BC. One of them, called **Abraham**, is considered as the Father of the Jewish people. In fact, Jews believe that God has concluded an **Alliance** with Abraham (at a time in history when people worshiped many divinities), offering him his protection and a land for his descendants (Canaan, the **Promised Land**), in exchange for their exclusive obedience. Abraham settles in Canaan (the current Israel) with his family. His son Isaac will in turn have a son called Jacob, and who God decides to nickname Israel. The descendants of Abraham will later be called **Israelites**.



Shortly after, famine forces Abraham's descendants to Egypt, where they become slaves of the Pharaoh. The Israelites will only be freed from slavery around 1250 AD (following the 10 plagues inflicted to Egypt by God). They leave the country, led by **Moses** who miraculously parted **the Red Sea** to allow his people to cross safely. The Israelites will then start their long exodus to the land of Canaan.

During the 40 years spent in the **desert of Sinai**, they will receive the **Ten Commandments from God**:

1. I am the Lord, your God who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.
2. You shall have no other god than me.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.



⁴ Adapted from: ROGERS K. & HICKMAN C., *World Religions*, London : Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2002, pp. 24-35
COMMUNAUTE WALLONIE BRUXELLES, *Guide pratique des religions et des convictions - Le judaïsme*,
Bruxelles : Editions Ousia, 2004

Once back in Canaan, the Israelites will be at war for 200 years before managing to conquer the land and the **Kingdom of Israel**. Much later, *Babylonians* will destroy the southern part of the kingdom, called **Judea**, and will send its inhabitants into exile. Those exiled Israelites will later be called **Jews**, a name which will then be applied to the whole Israelite community.

The Romans occupied Israel from the 1st century BC. It is during this same period that the Jewish prophet Jeshua ben Josef (known as **Jesus of Nazareth**) was born and later crucified by the Romans who saw him as a threat to the Empire (After his death, Jesus was recognized as **the Messiah** by Christians. Jews on the other hand were still waiting for a leader to bring them universal peace, and therefore did not recognize Jesus Christ as a Messiah).

Under Roman occupation, Jews were heavily persecuted and were forced to flee (their exodus was called **Diaspora**). It provided the opportunity for the Romans to rename Judea "Provincia syria Palaestina" (*Philistine Syrian Province*), which later gave its name to **Palestine**.

To safeguard their identity, the exiled Jews decided to scrupulously respect their traditions (such as holy days and dietary restrictions). The presence of a community with such different habits soon raises suspicion and hostility (**anti-Semitism**).

During the middle-Ages, they are thrown out of some countries or gathered in **ghettos**. Great numbers of Jews are massacred, just like the **pogroms** in Russia, Poland and Lithuania at the beginning of the 20th Century, or the **Shoah** during the Second World War under Nazi dictatorship.

At the end of the Second World War, the United Nations agree to take the tragedy experienced by the Jewish People during more than 2000 years into consideration.

As a form of compensation, in 1947 the UN votes for **a plan to share Palestine** into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

This partly answers the request of **Sionists**, a Jewish group settled in Palestine during the 19th century and calling for national liberation. But, the plan also takes away the land of the Arabs who have lived in Palestine for many centuries.

The proclamation of the Israel state (1948), will also be the start of never-ending and explosive Arab-Israeli conflicts resulting in innumerable victims in both camps.

A few characteristics of the religion

The Jewish place of worship is called a **synagogue** (meaning "meeting place"). It is usually a rectangular shaped building, with seats arranged along three walls, the fourth wall facing Jerusalem.



In orthodox synagogues (orthodox meaning in this case "traditionalist"), men and women sit separately. In liberal synagogues, everyone sits together. The traditional service is less formal than in other religions: worshipers may come and go whenever they want and talk quietly during service.

A **rabbi** usually conducts the ceremony. The rabbi teaches the Jewish faith and law. He has the authority to marry, pronounce divorces and burials.

He is not a priest as he doesn't play the role of intermediary between god and his followers. Judaism has in fact **no clergy or any central authority** to impose specific beliefs or behaviours.

Various books contain the teachings of Judaism:

1. The **Tanakh** (or Old Testament), composed – among others – of the **Torah**, which contains the instructions given my God to Moses. The Tanakh is written in **Hebrew**, the current official language of Israel.
2. The **Talmud**, which gathers comments from over 2'000 rabbi about the Tanakh. These comments are of legal nature and often contradict themselves. These contradictions illustrate how little Judaism is based on dogmas, apart from the affirmation of Monotheism.
3. The **Zohar**, which is a mystical interpretation of the Tanakh.



THE SECOND PRINTED HEBREW BIBLE, NAPLES, 1491: BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA
(Engraved border ascribed to Moses ben Isaac)

The Jewish Faith includes many different prayers. Some must be recited three times a day, others during special occasions like the day of Sabbath.

The **Shema** prayer is to be recited before going to bed and on the death bed. It is the affirmation of the unity and uniqueness of God.

The **Sabbath** (*shabbat* in Hebrew) is the Holy Day for the Jews. It starts on Friday at sunset and finishes on Saturday at sunset. It is a day dedicated to rest and religious reflection during which nobody works.

Orthodox Jews respect the biblical dietary laws. Meals should be prepared following the laws of God: It is called **kosher food** (meaning *permitted*). It is for instance prohibited to eat meat and dairy products at the same time, or even to prepare them using the same utensils. Animals must be bled, as blood is considered as the animal's life and is too sacred to be eaten. The Torah forbids many types of food, including pork and sea food.

Girls reach religious majority at the age of 12 (**bat-mitsva**) and boys at the age of 13 (**bar-mitsva**). The occasion is celebrated with a great ceremony at the Synagogue followed by a party.

There is a Jewish New Year based on the lunar calendar. It commemorates the creation of the world by God and is marked by a 2-day celebration called **Rosh ha-Shana**.

Ten days later is the Purification day, **Yom Kippour**. It is the most scared day of the year. Prayers are recited to ask for the forgiveness of others and God, and for all our **wrong doings**.

The **Pessah** takes place in March or April and lasts 8 days. It commemorates the Israelites leaving Egypt. For this occasion, the house is thoroughly cleaned to eliminate any traces of bread or yeast. **The reason for this being that Israelites did not have the time to let their bread rise when they suddenly fled Egypt.** It is therefore **azyme** bread which is served during meals (flat bread without yeast).

שמע ישראל יהוה יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Christianity⁵

Christians believe in the teachings of a man called **Jesus** who was born about 2000 years and was known by his disciples as "Christ". This word means "**Messiah**", the liberator chosen by God. Christians consider Jesus as the son of God: he represents God in a human form. Today, Christianity can be found in most parts of the world and it is probably the largest religion with over 1 billion followers.



Jesus was a Jew born in Judea under the Roman occupation. According to Christian writings, he is born in Bethlehem, of a young virgin lady called Mary, through the sole willpower of God. Jesus is baptised at the age of 33. He chooses 12 **disciples** (Thomas, Mathew, John, Judas, Peter, etc.) - also called his **apostles** - and starts teaching. He is known for being able to cure the sick and perform miracles. The Jewish religious authorities see the growing popularity of Jesus and the activities undertaken with his apostles as a threat: **he forgives people's sins** which, according to the Jews, only God is allowed to do.

Three years after starting to teach, Jesus visits Jerusalem with his disciples for the Pessah. At his arrival in the city on a donkey's back, he is welcomed as a king: the crowd hopes that he will chase the **roman invaders** and re-establish the Jewish kingdom. Once people realise that no such thing will happen, they turn against Jesus: He is accused of **blasphemy** (using the name of God with disrespect). **Judas**, one of his disciples, betrays Jesus and hands him over to the Roman authorities. Too scared of the potential rebellion of the Jews if he liberated Jesus, **Pontius Pilate**, the Roman governor, orders him to be **crucified** till death.

The body of Jesus is then buried in a tomb, but the tomb is found empty after the third day. Some of the disciples claim to have seen Jesus alive, back with his own, and the news of his **resurrection** spreads very quickly. It is said that Jesus reappeared several times before rising to heaven to join God, his Father. This event is also called **Ascension**.

After Jesus's death, his word is spread by his disciples: it is the birth of Christianity. Christianity is recognized as a legal religion during the 4th century by the Roman emperor **Constantine** who defines the dogma of the **Holy Trinity** (God is one in three: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), a central element of Christian teachings.



Christian teachings are written in the **Bible**, which is divided in two parts:

1. The **Old Testament** (the word Testament meaning "promise" or "alliance"): it is written in Hebrew and is practically identical to the Hebraic Bible.
2. The **New Testament** is written in Greek and tells the story of Jesus's life, his teachings and how - through him - a new alliance can be established with God. It is composed of 27 books (four **Gospels**, twenty one **Epistles**, the Book of **Acts** and the Book of **Revelations**).

⁵ Adapted from: ROGERS K. & HICKMAN C., *World Religions*, London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2002, pp. 48-63
COMMUNAUTE WALLONIE BRUXELLES, *Guide pratique des religions et des convictions*, Brussels : Editions Ousia, 2004

A few Christian celebrations

Every Sunday, at the church, Christians commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus Christ: they drink the wine (blood of Christ) and eat the bread (body of Christ): it is called the **Eucharist**.

All Saints Day is commemorated on the 1st of November. It is a celebration for all the saints, i.e. all the persons recognized by the orthodox and catholic churches for their exemplary life.



Christmas (Noël in French), comes from the Latin word *dies natalis* (date of birth), celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Although its exact date is unknown, western countries celebrate it on the 25th of December. This date was chosen by the Emperor Constantine as it coincided with the Roman day of the Sun. The Orthodox Church, which has a different calendar, celebrates the birth of Christ on the 6th of January.



Lent is the period preceding Easter during which Christians remember their sins. In the past, people would fast for a period of 40 days. Nowadays, the tradition has disappeared. However, some people may decide to stop eating a type of food which they really like during this period.

Easter day commemorates the resurrection of Jesus. It is always celebrated on a Sunday. His death is commemorated on **Good Friday**, two days before.

The **Ascension** is celebrated 40 days after Easter, always on a Thursday.

Pentecost commemorates the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles of Jesus. It is also commonly accepted that Pentecost is the day of the Christian Church's foundation. Pentecost marks the end of the Easter period.

The **Assumption** commemorates the day when Virgin Mary was received into heaven. It is celebrated on the 15th of August.



Catholicism

The Pope (Father), Supreme Pontiff, is the head of the Catholic Church (or community). He leads a pyramid-shaped structure composed of cardinals, bishops, priests and other baptised Christians who are not part of the Clergy.

The word **catholic** means "universal".

The Catholic Church intends to reach the entire world, whichever the race, sex, origin or location of its followers.

Orthodoxy



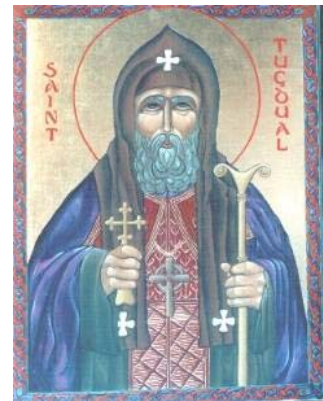
During the 6th Century, the Roman Empire is divided into two. **Constantinople** remains the capital of the Orient Empire, whereas **Rome** becomes the capital of the Occidental Empire. In 1054, a conflict arises between the head of the Church of Constantinople (the patriarch) and the head of the Roman Church (the pope). The conflict ends with the separation of the two branches of the Church (the **Great Schism**). The Church of the Occidental Empire will later be called the Roman Catholic Church. The Oriental Church will be called the Orthodox Church.

During the following years, slight differences will develop between the beliefs and cults of both Churches. Those small differences still remain today.

The number of orthodox in the world is estimated at more than 174 millions. In Belgium, for instance, those are mainly people coming from Greek communities, but also Russian communities, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Romanian, Serb...

Although it is not after any sort of political power, the Orthodox Church has become allied with **various nations** (i.e. the patriarchate Greeks, the Russian, the autonomous Churches of Finland and Estonia). As opposed to the Catholic Church, it has no central common organisation.

The orthodox art – and most particularly its vocal music and visual art (such as mosaics, icons and frescoes) - is well know for its magnificence



Protestantism

During the 16th century, the behaviour of the Roman Catholic Church (the only institution at the time to ensure the salvation of souls in the Occident) provokes the discontent of many followers. Those discontented followers denounce, among others, the system of **indulgences** (an amount of money that people had to pay to gain their place in heaven).

Men such as **Martin Luther** (in Germany), **Jean Calvin** (in France) or **Guy de Brès** (in Belgium) **protest** against the authority of the Pope and the church leaders. They wish to go back to the basics of Christianity and to offer their devotion to God only (as opposed to offering it to the Pope, the saints and the Virgin Mary).



Luther

Jesus shows the true path to this devotion. Their ambition is therefore not to establish a new Christian religion but rather **to reform** it thoroughly.

In some parts of Europe, such as France, those protest movements are almost totally crushed. In other parts however, they get the support of the authorities: "to each region its religion" becomes the general motto. Nowadays, those positions are still well alive: **Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists, Baptists, Mennonites** and many others are all protestant groups.

During the 16th century, Europe goes through a division of religions and it still bears its marks nowadays. The north of Europe is mainly Protestant (North of Germany, Scandinavia ...), whereas the south (the Latin countries), where Protestantism was long persecuted, is mostly Catholic.

In Protestantism, there is no intermediary between God and men. The **parish priest** is the minister of the cult: He is a scholar and an advisor but that does not make him superior in the eyes of God.

Belgian example:

In Belgium, there are just under 100'000 Protestants. Although they all form part of the **United Protestant Church of Belgium**, each local community keeps its own sovereignty. There is no pope or any form of central authority: the Bible is at the centre of the religion. Each follower is solely responsible for the reading of the Bible and their actions (it is the principle of free examination): according to Protestantism, there can be no freedom without responsibility.



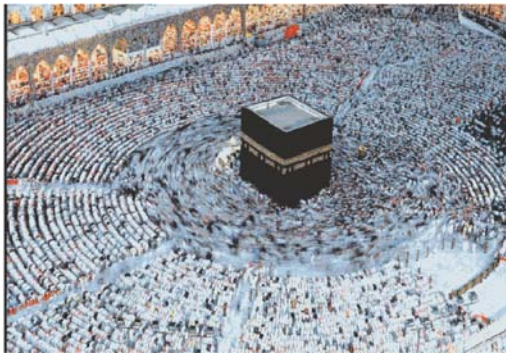
Calvin

Islam⁶



The word Islam means "trust and adhesion to the will of God". The followers are called Muslims, a word which means "believers". Muslims believe that the word of God was revealed to Mohammed, also called "the Prophet" (God's messenger), at the beginning of the 7th century. There are today approximately 1 billion Muslims in the world, mainly in the Middle East, North Africa and in certain parts of Asia.

Mohammed was born during the 6th century in a city called Mecca, in Arabia. He is raised by his kind and generous uncle to become a caravaner, husband and father. But it doesn't make him a happy man: he disapproves of his fellow-men's behaviour and their belief in several gods. Monotheism, which was supported by Abraham and spread across Arabia, has almost disappeared.



Mohammed likes to retire into the mountains to pray and meditate. When he reaches the age of 40, Mohammed receives a vision from the **angel Gabriel**, who tells him he has been chosen to be God's messenger to mankind.

He is asked to speak to the people of Mecca to promote Monotheism, faith in the one and only god (The word God in Arab is Allah). During his whole life, Mohammed continues to receive messages from God.

Mohammed starts preaching in Mecca: the basis of his message is that there is no other god than god himself. He gets more and more followers and his popularity and growing power soon raises the concerns of the political authorities who start plotting against him.

In 622, to escape persecution, Mohammed and his supporters are forced to leave Mecca and seek exile in another Arab city: **Medina** (the city of the Prophet). The event is so important that it marks the start of the Islamic calendar: according to this lunar calendar. We currently are in the 15th century.



In Medina, Mohammed gets more supporters. In just a few years, the Muslims manage to free Mecca and to unify north and south Arabia. Mohammed is finally recognised as God's Prophet. He is respected as the head of religion and state.

After Mohammed's death, Muslims are ruled by several leaders - the **caliphs** - who lead several wars with the aim of defending and spreading Islam.

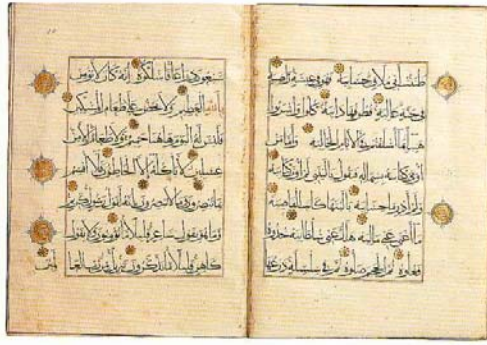
Their conquest includes the Persian and Byzantine empires, North Africa, Spain and Portugal (until the end of the 15th century).

The conquered people may preserve their religion by paying a tax. Through these conquests, Muslims play an essential role in the development and diffusion of **knowledge** (in medicine, astronomy, architecture, art, mathematics – **Arab numerals** soon replace Roman numerals).

⁶ Adapted from : ROGERS K. & HICKMAN C., *World Religions*, London: Osborne Publishing Ltd., 2002, pp. 68-79
GODIN S., *Les religions dans le monde*, Paris : Nathan, 2002

A few characteristics of the religion

The two main branches of Islam are **Sunni** and **Shiite**.



At Mohammed's death, Muslims do not all agree about his succession and think they should choose the most worthy among them to replace him. Abu Bakr, a faithful fellowman of Mohammed, succeeds him. The **Sunni** decide to follow him. **Shiites**, on the other hand, follow Ali, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, as they consider him better suited to lead the believers. They are a minority in Islam but a majority in Iran and Iraq.

The word of God revealed to Mohammed is first transmitted by word of mouth. Soon after the prophet's death, they are written down in **Arab**, and gathered in one book: the **Koran**. Most Muslims try to read it in the original Arab language although it isn't their own language. They read an extract every day and perform ablutions before touching it as a sign of respect.

Quotations and actions of Mohammed (the **Sunnah**) are recorded in the **Hadith**; writings which help to understand the Koran. Muslims believe in God, Angels, sacred books, prophets of the Old and New Testaments – such as *Adam*, *Ibrahim* (or Abraham), *Moussa* (or Moses), *Dawoud* (or David), *Issa* (or Jesus), Judgement day, life after death and destiny.

Islam is founded on **five pillars** guiding Muslims in applying Islamic beliefs in their everyday life:

1. The **chahadah** (or Faith), which is repeated several times a day: "There is no other God than God and Mohammed is his Prophet"
2. The **five daily prayers** recited in Arab, at dawn, noon, mid afternoon, sun set and nightfall
3. The "**zakat**", setting aside a proportion for those in need.
4. The **fast** during the month of Ramadan. All Muslims fast from first light until sundown, abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations. In the Koran, God explains that it helps Muslims to concentrate on their faith. The Ramadan period is used to study the Koran, show self-discipline and interest in others.
5. The **pilgrimage** to Mecca

Muslims go to the **mosque** to gather and pray.

The main part of a mosque is a large rectangular room. Its walls are lavishly decorated with paintings or mosaics but it contains no images or statues. Before entering the mosque, worshipers perform ablutions as a sign of respect towards God.

The women sit separately from the men. They must cover their head when praying. People must also take off their shoes to ensure that the praying area remains clean. There are no seats: People sit or kneel on the floor. An **Imam**, or *knowledgeable man*, leads the cult.





It is also the Imam who performs weddings. In Islam, there aren't any clergy per say but rather experts in religious sciences. They have the authority but they remain fallible and responsible for their mistakes: among them are the **Ayatollah** (jurisconsults), the **Mujtahid** (philosophical thinkers who go through the effort of interpreting and adapting texts in detail), the **Mufti** (religious wise men) and the **Imam** (praying guides).

The religious laws of Islam - taken from the Koran and the Sunnah - form the **Sharia** (clear and straight path). In Islamic countries such as Iran, there are few differences between the laws of the religion and the laws of the country. On the other hand, Muslims living in a non-Islamic country find themselves torn between the obligation to follow the laws and customs of the country where they live and their desire to follow those of Islam.

The Sharia includes 3 **dietary laws**: an animal must – for example – be slaughtered in a certain way to be **Halal** (*legal*). Muslims are forbidden to eat pork, considered as impure. **Alcohol** is also forbidden as it has a negative impact on man's health and dignity.

There are two main Islamic celebrations: Aid-el-Fitr and Aid-el-Adha (**Aid** meaning *celebration* in Arab). The first one celebrates the **end of the Ramadan fast**: people go to the mosque to pray god and then gather with their family, invite friends and share food. The second one is also known as "the **sacrifice celebration**". It commemorates the sacrifice which Abraham was about to make for god by offering him the life of his only son, Ishmael, when God suddenly made a ram appear and take the place of his son.



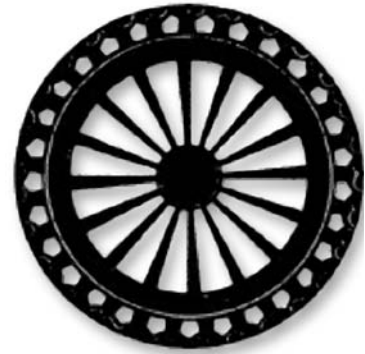
Buddhism⁷

The word "Buddhism" refers to the **religious movement** (containing many varied trends) which evolves around the central character of **Buddha**, its presumed founder.

Although it was originally born in **India**, Buddhism disappeared from there during the 12th century following the Muslims conquests, meaning that it is currently only found outside of its country of origin.

The number of Buddhists around the world is estimated at 500 million, located mainly in the south and south-east of India (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Burma, and Cambodia) as well as in the north and north-east of India (China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Tibet, and Mongolia).

The Movement established itself fairly recently in the western populations (in the USA, Australia, New-Zealand and Europe), mostly thanks to its **philosophical** attraction (mainly **meditation**) rather than its devotional and community aspects.



Siddhartha Gautama (who later became the Buddha) was born during the 6th century BC in the north of India.

The legend tells that he was a prince who lived a carefree life during his whole youth in the luxury of his palace. He was totally unaware that other people may have had a harder life than his.

One day, his curiosity pushed him out of his dwelling and he made four encounters. He came across a **dead body** (which made him aware of death), a **sick person** (which

made him aware of physical suffering) and then an **old man** (which made him realise the unavoidable decay of mankind).

He then realised the limits of his own happiness as all human beings must face those problems sooner or later. The comfort which he was so used to was in fact an illusion, as being alive meant having to face **suffering** (all those things that make life less perfect)... And what makes mankind suffer is the knowledge that the pleasures of life cannot last forever.

Siddhartha was wondering how to find a solution to the problems of existence when he made his fourth encounter: he saw an **ascetic** who owned nothing, had left his family and spent his time looking for enough strength within himself to accept the suffering of life.

Siddhartha then decided to leave his palace forever and to meditate in the forest. His decision was a renunciation: he renounced illusionary **pleasures, desire** and **attachment** to try to find a durable source of satisfaction.

Exhausted and dying, after a long period of strict fast, he realised that the problem could not be solved through extreme means.

⁷ Adapted from : COMMUNAUTE WALLONIE BRUXELLES, *Guide pratique des religions et des convictions - Le bouddhisme*, Brussels: Editions Ousia, 2004, p. 42

He promised himself to follow what he called **the Middle Way**: not too much luxury and not too much hardship. After a night of meditation, he suddenly experienced **enlightenment**: the meaning of all things was revealed to him.

His conscience had totally opened up (This is when Siddhartha became *Buddha*, the enlightened).

He was not the victim of illusions anymore (**Samsara**); He had understood the mechanisms behind suffering and its perpetration: He had reached **Nirvana**.



The "awakening" also means having totally fulfilled all of our potential as a human being.

This complete opening is often compared to the hatching of a lotus flower: The lotus grows its roots in silt, but it then frees itself to become a dazzling plant in the sun. In the same way, feelings (such as anger and jealousy) tend to limit a person's life by clouding the mind and preventing it from seeing reality for what it truly is. However, people can slowly purify their mind and let it open up.

That is also why the meditation posture (sitting with the left foot on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh) is also called *the lotus posture* and why Buddha is represented sitting on this flower.

Buddhism is based on a conception of mankind and mankind's destiny which is very different from the religions commonly found in western countries. In fact, Buddha is **not a prophet**, he hasn't received any revelation. Moreover, **there isn't any unique god** with whom humans could communicate. The nature of Buddha is present in each human being. Buddha wished to be an **ordinary man**, showing to all humans (who are also *ordinary* as all men are equal in spirituality) a path, a **discipline**. This is why the story of Buddha's life should serve as an example for each of us.

The Buddhist **doctrine** is called the **Dharma**. It is the **method** elaborated by Buddha to purify his mind. It contains several speeches which encourage good actions and discourage bad ones. The doctrine also includes practical instructions to improve concentration during meditation. It is therefore **not a law** but rather a collection of analysis and self-discipline processes.

To set up his religion, Buddha based himself on **Brahmanism** - the traditional religion of India, and its main ideas, such as the idea of **soul transmigration**: life is a never-ending process of births and deaths, all human beings are reborn after their death in an superior (humans) or inferior (animals and demons) form, depending on their behaviour in their former life. However, Buddha brought some major modifications. The most important change being of social nature: instead of saving religion for the highest social class, Buddhism offers spirituality to every single human being.

The path suggested by Buddhism is a **path to individual blossoming**: you cannot force people to be happy. It is therefore important that they fully engage in this philosophical discipline to see the first results.

Buddhism can therefore be presented as a religion which doesn't try to convert people by all means but which remains open to all religions with **great tolerance**. That is why the various forms of Buddhism encountered around the world are so different: The new religion has each time been adapted to the local former customs and cults. As an example, the complete lack of ornamentation in Japanese Buddhism contrasts totally with the abundance of images in Tibetan Buddhism.

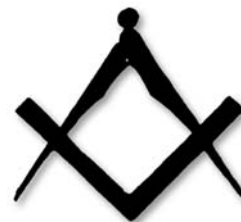
Buddhism preaches **non-violence**, the main reason being **the respect of the principle of life** – All living creatures, even animals, have a soul which could one day reach the Nirvana. Moreover, most Buddhists are vegetarians. The second reason being that there is no point in resorting to force when trying to obtain something. Instead, it is much better to try understanding the nature of things.

Finally, it must be mentioned that there is no religious figure which has power over all other Buddhists. The **Dalai-Lama** – for instance – is not the religious leader of Buddhists; he is simply the best known representative of Tibetan Buddhism. He became a worldwide celebrity when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. He represents the non-violent Tibetan resistance to Chinese domination and is generally thought of as the moral authority.



Freemasonry⁸

In England and Scotland, at the beginning of the 18th century, several men gathered to form the freemasonry, **a thinking society** which is now present on all five continents. Having come from various philosophical horizons (Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims and a few atheists), they wanted to meet in clubs called **lodges** to fraternize and freely exchange their points of view.



Masonry is part of the innovative mind which intends to turn its back on religious wars and theological disputes to gather mankind around a tolerant vision of society. Its success was immediate: Masonry was exported everywhere across Europe and even further into the colonies. Since its establishment, masonry has counted many celebrities among its followers: Mozart, Voltaire, Casanova, Washington, Liszt, Leopold the 1st, Bakounine, Bartholdi, Bolivar, Kipling, Churchill, Allende, Armstrong, Decroly, Chagall, etc.

But these great names should not hide the reality: Many "normal people" are free masons. There are between 5 and 6 millions of masons across the world. They are people from all walks of life: a few ministers and a few artists, many teachers, state servants, employees, small independents...

Because it practises **discretion**, the only condition is to be able to speak freely, masonry has been and often remains misunderstood. It was forbidden by many political and religious authorities (The catholic Church, from 1738 to 1983, the Soviet bloc countries, Spain under Franco, Portugal under Salazar, Italy under Mussolini and Germany during the Nazi period). Freemasonry can only survive and expand on a **democratic territory**.

Freemasonry is an initiatory and symbolic society: Its method is based on the practice of rituals and the meditation of symbols (such as a square or a pair of compasses)

Freemasonry **is not a secret society**: the fact that everybody knows about it proves it! It is however a discreet society or a society with secrets, a way of protecting each individual's life.

Freemasonry **is not a sect**: It intends to help people to be free, to stand up, as opposed to a sect which suppresses all forms of freedom. And it is actually easier to leave freemasonry than to join it. Moreover, no parliamentary commission of enquiry on sects has ever prosecuted a freemasonry association.

Freemasonry **is not a religion**. However, many religions see it wrongly as a rival religion and strongly advise their members not to take part in it.

⁸ Adapted from: COMMUNAUTE WALLONIE BRUXELLES, *Guide pratique des religions et des convictions - La franc-maçonnerie*, Bruxelles : Editions Ousia, 2004, p. 32

Secularism ("Laïcité" in French)⁹

The Greek word *laikos* means "people", as opposed to *clericos* which means "the person with religious authority". The concept of secularism, which developed in Europe from the 17th century, is that **citizens and state are independent from the church**. Its main objective is therefore to set up a legal and political system with a clear separation between State and religions and to introduce neutral religion.



For a State to be secular, religions cannot have any political authority and, in the same way, the State cannot have any authority within the religious domain and must leave the Churches free to organise themselves in civil society (the communist China, for instance, cannot be considered as a secular state because it does not fulfil the last criteria). Actually, there never is an absolute split for the simple reason that a State cannot give total freedom to religion (it must be able to impose some rules whilst avoiding interference). Also, traditionally, there have always been some joint areas involving both the State and Churches (e.g. education). In Belgium for example, religious schools and its teachers' salaries are financed by the State.

When considering this first definition, it is therefore possible to be secular and belong to a church at the same time since there is no question about personal belief (religious or not) but rather a conception of how life should be organised within the society.

However, there is a second meaning to the word « secular »: it also refers to **people who belong to no religion** but who wish, just like other groups, to offer their children a **moral education** or some assistance to its members with the financial help of the State. Secularism, in this sense, is described by the *Centre for Secularism Action* (In Belgium) as being: "The personal elaboration of how we see life based on our experience as human beings, excluding any sectarian, dogmatic or supernatural references. This outlook on life implies adhering to the values of free judgement, of emancipation towards all forms of conditioning, as well as citizenship and legal obligations".

For Laymen, any doctrine or belief must be **questioned through reasoning**, without considering any references from higher authorities. The way we think should not be influenced by any dogma and no matter should receive a definite judgement. It is the responsibility of each of us to think, doubt, and ask ourselves – when confronted with an opinion (even general) – if this point of view can be justified.

⁹ Adapted from : YAHOO ENCYCLOPEDIAS, *La laïcité*, Paris : Hachette,

http://fr.encyclopedia.yahoo.com/articles/ni/ni_1061_p0.html#ni_1061.3, 2001

COMMUNAUTE WALLONIE BRUXELLES, *Guide pratique des religions et des convictions - La laïcité*, Bruxelles : Editions Ousia, 2004, p. 38

Atheism¹⁰

Atheism is a doctrine which consists in **denying the existence of God**.

An important question can therefore be asked: how can the religious phenomenon be universal, be present across the entire planet?

This question led atheist philosophers such as Epicure, Freud or Feuerbach to look into the social and psychological nature of men to explain the origin of this idea of God.

Agnosticism¹¹

This word was invented by the British naturalist *Thomas Huxley* during the 19th century, in opposition to *Gnosticism* (Which takes supernatural and irrational phenomenon into account in its analysis of the world).

Agnosticism refers to a philosophical idea according to which **it is impossible for human beings to make any statements** about the existence or the nature of a God, and more generally, about any metaphysical matters.

Agnostics believe that it makes no sense to base our life on ideas which cannot be demonstrated.

Questioning the existence of god is therefore of no interest to them.

Humanism¹²

According to humanists, human beings have it **within themselves to be able to develop, to prosper**, and to make the world a happier, fairer and open place. Humanists consider that we only have one life.

We must therefore try to lead a full and happy life and allow others to do the same through our own actions.

Each situation and person should be judged through their own merits rather than strict rules.

¹⁰ Source: YAHOO ENCYCLOPEDIAS, *L'athéisme*, Paris : Hachette, http://fr.encyclopedia.yahoo.com/articles/ni/ni_1061_p0.html#ni_1061.3, 2001

¹¹ Source: YAHOO ENCYCLOPEDIAS, *L'agnosticisme*, Paris : Hachette, http://fr.encyclopedia.yahoo.com/articles/ni/ni_1061_p0.html#ni_1061.3, 2001

¹² Source : ROGERS K. & HICKMAN C., *World Religions*, London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2002, pp. 11

And what about pluralism? ¹³

Pluralism is not the juxtaposition of all religions and beliefs. It would be too simple and would make it a kind of Pluralism de facto.

The idea of Pluralism goes back a very long time. Its spiritual father was the Greek philosopher Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500 – 428 B.C.).

He believed that collective intelligence had saved the world from chaos and had led it to a mixture, to a composition.

This is the true essence of the Pluralist vision: We meet to enrich one another as opposed to imposing one way of thinking or one belief to the other.

Pluralists explain the whole through its various, dispersed, discontinued and irreducible parts. Not only are the different parts the basis of the thinking process, but they also form its result.

When different areas need to be linked, Pluralists will use links which are as flexible as possible and leave them with as much of their initial autonomy as they can.

Pluralists are constantly aware of differences, of the distance between different beings and different objects, taking into account the great variety of gifts and skills involved.

Pluralists are wary of the number "1" and always add the word "and" at the end of any enumeration because there is always something which they might have missed.

¹³ RESZLER A., *Le Pluralisme*, Geneva : Georg Editeur S.A. & Institut universitaire d'études européennes, 1990

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SPI Activity	Activity title:	Sheet - blank
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Spiritual development objective: How does this activity fit into the spiritual development framework? Tick the appropriate boxes.

It allows young people ...

- To get to know themselves better
- To discover the people they meet, through their values, their beliefs, their conviction and their culture
- To explore various beliefs, customs, philosophies or religions
- To explore the world around them
- To discover the meaning of spiritual symbols (such as the Yin and the Yang, the Egyptian "key of life", etc.)
- To develop or structure one's value system
- To talk about one's beliefs, values and share them with others
- To express one's emotions and share them with the group
- To develop one's ability to listen to others
- To develop the respect of silence
- Other objective:

Section :	<i>With which section(s) can this activity be organised?</i>
Time :	
Number :	<i>Ideal number of participants</i>
Material :	
Type :	<i>Should the activity take place indoors or outdoors?</i>

Activity guidelines

Comments





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