

EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

AT THE CLOSE OF AN EVENT

INTRODUCTION

It is recommendable to hold an evaluation session at the close of a retreat, camp, seminar, etc. The purpose of the evaluation session is manifold:

To drive home to the participants the main ideas of the retreat, camp/ seminar/ etc.

To help the participants to interiorize their findings and insights.

To help us to enhance our work and our methods.

To correct any mistakes and deficiencies in the future

To close the event in a friendly and cordial mood.

As far as possible all the participants should participate in the evaluation.

All the moderators should be present at the evaluation session.

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1 Fish-Bowl:

PROCEDURE:

- At the end of the event the participants will sit in a circle.
- Keep in the middle of the circle a box or a container: **"The Fish Bowl"**
- The moderator will keep in the bowl some **"Fishes"**, i.e. folded slips of paper with evaluation questions to be answered by the participants. for instance:
 1. What did you like most in the retreat, camp?
 2. What did you dislike most?
 3. Did you find the topics relevant? Which? How? Why?
 4. Were the sessions too long? Too short? Just right? Give reasons.
 5. What are your comments on the liturgies we had?.
 6. Was prayer time sufficient? Too long, too short? How would you like it?
 7. Were the moderators approachable enough? How would you like them to be
 8. Was the group members' participation enough? Not enough? Why? In what areas?

9. Were there any topics missing? Which?
 10. Did the retreat/camp help you to solve some of your problems? Would you like to snare about this?
 11. Can you offer some suggestions to improve our retreats/camps?. Which?
 12. Could we have a follow-up of our retreat/camp in the near future? How? When? What? Give you suggestions. Etc.
- Keep as many "fishes" or questions as participants.
 - Ask for a volunteer to set the ball rolling. The volunteer gets up, goes to the centre, picks one "fish" from the "bowl", reads the question aloud and replies to it.
 - After he replies, anyone is welcome to give his views, even if they are opposite ones.
 - Clarifications maybe asked. No discussion allowed, only views are to be expressed..
 - Next, another volunteer will pick another fish, and so on and so forth. No one can volunteer twice. One or two secretaries will take notes of the views expressed. You may tape the session.
 - At the end of the "Fish-bowl, the moderator or moderators may give a short feedback to the group about its performance.
 - Anyone may ask for personal feedback from the moderator or from the group members.
 - One of the moderators may wind up the session with a little mop-up input on the proceedings.
 - A short prayer may follow may close the session.

2 Collage and/or Poster Making

Note: *This is a good method for holiday camps, mission trips, and the like when there is plenty of time at your disposal. It keeps the youngsters busy during the last day of the camp. The method is not so apt for retreats, seminars and other events when you run short of time.*

PROCEDURE

- Explain the technique to the participants
 1. Express what the camp, retreat, etc, has meant to you by means of a collage or a poster.
 2. Depict through pictures, colors, photos, cuttings, drawings, letterings:, etc, the strong and the weak points of the event, what you liked best and least, your gains, frustrations, and hopes, etc
 3. The collages or posters can be prepared on an individual basis (*each participant prepares his own*), or on small group basis
- Give them time to prepare the collages or posters. Supply them with the required materials.
- When the collages or posters are ready, call the house for a general session. Each participant or each group (as the case may be) will present and explain his own poster or collage to the house.
- Clarifications may be asked. No discussion to be entertained.
- The moderators may ask for some further clarifications and explanations to bring out the main ideas and feelings awakened by the retreat or camp.
- After that, the collages and posters may be hung on the wall for display. All will go round and examine them carefully

- At the end of the display the moderator may request the participants to answer in writing the following or similar questions:
 1. All in all, do the participants seem to be happy with the camp and to what extent?
 2. What are the things they liked best and or disliked most?
 3. What are the main points you learned at the camp?
 4. What posters express best what you felt? How? Why?
 5. Any other remarks?
- Wind up the session with a little input based on the participants' remarks
- End by a short prayer.

3. Letter Writing

PROCEDURE

Personal Work: Letter writing.

- Ask the participants to write a simple and honest letter to their best friend, or to the one who invited them to the camp or retreat, to tell him about their impressions.
- Make it clear to them that the most important point is not sort of a detailed narrative of the activities and timetable and other externals of the retreat or camp, but their feelings and personal experiences, such as :
 - ✓ What I expected the retreat or camp would be and what I found it to be
 - ✓ What I liked most and why.
 - ✓ What I disliked most and why
 - ✓ What I learned.
 - ✓ What was boring and why
 - ✓ What I found useless and why
 - ✓ What I would like to change
 - ✓ What I found missing
 - ✓ What and how I felt.
 - ✓ What I gained
 - ✓ What has the retreat or camp done to me.
 - ✓ What I intend doing after the retreat or camp
 - ✓ How the retreat or camp could be improved. Give suggestions.

Group Work

Sharing their letters

- Call the house and have the participants read their letters aloud.
- Clarifications may be asked Discussions not to be entertained.

Group evaluation and critique:

Ask the following questions to the house: *(They may reply on writing or by word of mouth)*

1. What's the general tone of the letters?
2. General impressions and feelings.

3. Positive points
4. Negative points
5. General gains
6. Things most liked, things disliked
7. Things to be added, things to be dropped, things to be improved

Winding up:

- The moderator/s may offer their remarks and observations.
- If any member would like to have personal feedback, he may ask for it from the group and/or from the moderators..

Closing Prayer.

4 Symbolic Drawings - Paintings

INTRODUCTION

This technique is very effective to discover "unexpressed" feelings. It facilitates the participants to express their feelings – positive and negative - without "inhibitions". It is based on a projective method. It may generate a lot of material to be processed later on in step 3 of the session.

Moderators should make sure that there is sufficient time for processing the data that may surface during the sharing time.

PROCEDURE

Requirements

Supply the participants with paper, crayons, felt color pens, scissors, color papers, gum, etc. Give them sufficient time to plan and finish their drawings.

1. Personal Work:

Instructions for the participants.

Express symbolically by means of drawings, paintings and colors what the retreat or camp has been to you; for instance, a garden: shapes, trees, bushes, flowers, fruits, thorns, stones, ponds, shades, etc. or a house, or a street, or a village, or a market place, etc, anything whatever that helps you to express your thoughts and feelings..

Each item you draw should signify something of the retreat or camp.

Each color also should have a symbolic meaning: e.g. white, dark, dull, blue, green, etc.

Express mainly:

- ✓ Your feelings,
- ✓ Things you liked most,
- ✓ Things you disliked most,
- ✓ Ideas

- ✓ Insights you gained.
- ✓ Self- discoveries.
- ✓ Things you found useful,
- ✓ Things you found useless,
- ✓ Expectations,
- ✓ Things you found painful,
- ✓ Disappointments
- ✓ Surprises, etc.

2. Group work.

- When the participants finish their drawings, one by one, will show them to the whole group and interpret them for the house,
- Clarifications may be asked, discussion will not to be entertained.

3. Group Analysis and Discussion.

Analysis:

After the participants showed their drawings and offered their explanations, ask the group to reflect on the following questions:

1. Judging from the **style of the drawings**: and from **the tenor of the explanations** given, what's the general feeling of the group about the retreat or camp – very good, good, O.K., or poor? What makes you say so?
2. What positive and negative points or remarks emerged about the retreat or camp? Enumerate them.
3. Kindly, verbalize, if you can, the positive and negative feelings underlining the drawings?
4. What are the general gains and insights gained by the group? Mention them.
5. What things could be improved, or added or dropped in future retreats or camps?

Discussion and Interaction:

- After hearing the remarks of the participants initiate a discussion on the main points that emerged.
- Encourage interaction among the group members.
- If need be, add a mop-up input on your observations on the working of the group

Closing Prayer.

- End the proceedings with a prayer.
- Involve the participants, invite there to pray aloud and spontaneously.

5. A Debate

INSTRUCTIONS

- We shall have a debate on the “pros and cons” of our camps or retreats.
- We shall deal specifically on their positive and the negative aspects

- The debate has to be based mostly on real camp or retreat experiences we have just had. The "Proposition" will be: **“Retreats and Camps like ours should be scrapped”**.
- The "Opposition will be:” **Retreat and Camps like ours should be encouraged”**
Participants will be free to opt for the "proposition" or for the "opposition".
- By allowing freedom to the group members to opt for the proposition or for the opposition we shall have two groups: in one side, those who are happy with the retreat or camp as we had it , and in the other side, those who are not so happy.
- By gathering facts and arguments for the continuance or discontinuance of our retreats and camps, he proposition and the opposition groups may give us a balanced evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of our retreat or camp.
- Each group will meet and choose from among their members, three speakers to represent them at the debate,
- The proposition members will have to supply to their representatives – real and factual - reasons, why such retreats or camps should be scrapped.
- Similarly, the opposition members will have to offer to their representatives real reasons, why such retreats and camps should be held and encouraged.
- The speakers will be given sufficient time to prepare their speeches.
- After that, the house will gather for the debate. Each speaker will be given maximum five minutes to speak.
- A jury composed of the moderators or of some guests invited for the occasion, will moderate the debate and declare the winners.

- **Personal Work.**

After the debate is over, give the participants the questions here below and ask them to answer them in writing.

1. What seems to be the prevalent feeling of the group about the retreat or camp? Describe.
2. Was there enough cooperation and involvement by all the participants? Explain.\
3. What are the main gains you got from it? Enumerate.
4. Which things participants liked most? Why?
5. Which they liked least? Why?
6. What things or items in the retreat or camp could be improved? Mention them.
7. Anything should be dropped? Which? Why?
8. Anything to be added? What?
9. Have your expectations been fulfilled? How?
10. Any other comments? Which?

- **Group Work**

- Sharing the replies, discuss, interact.
- If need be, give a short mop-up input.
- End by a short shared and spontaneous group prayer.

6. The Vacant Seat

This technique is good for a quick evaluation of large groups,

INSTRUCIONS

- Place a small circle of 7 or 9 or 11 chairs in the centre of the room. The number 7, 9 and 11 will be proportional to the number of participants.
- Ask for 5 or 7 or 9 volunteers to sit at the centre. Two chairs will always remain vacant.
- All the rest will sit in a outer concentric circle around the volunteers.
- The moderator will set the ball rolling by asking the volunteers to discuss, one by one, any of the questions here below or similar ones.
 1. Was it worth coming for this retreat, camp, etc.? Why? Explain.
 2. What have been some of the best items in the retreat or camp? Why?
 3. Which were the worst things in the retreat or camp? Why?
 4. Were the group members cooperative enough? How?
 5. Any deficiencies? Which?
 6. What gains has the retreat or camp brought to the participants? Enumerate.
 7. Have your expectations satisfied? How? Why?
 8. What things should be dropped in future retreats or camps? Why?
 9. What things could be improved? How?
 10. What things should be added? Why?
 11. Were the participants serious, hard-working and interested? How?
 12. Did the moderators come up to your expectations? How?
 13. Were the topics touched upon relevant to you? How?
 14. Did you like the liturgies and the prayer sessions? Why?
 15. Should we have any follow-up? When? How? Any suggestions?

Larger Group's Participation

- The other outer circle members will be only listeners..
- Members of the outer circle may join the inner group if they feel that they can contribute to the discussion. Yet, they should do it, one or two at a time, by occupying the vacant chairs at the centre.
- When the outer member or members who sat on the vacant chairs have done their contribution, they will go back to their old places
- They will keep the vacant chairs for others willing to contribute to the discussion.
- No outer member will sit permanently in the inner circle.

Group Prayer.

End the evaluation with a short prayer session.

7 Magnifying Glasses

A Method for Small Groups Evaluation.

PROCEDURE

- ✓ Tell the participants; imagine you are reporters.
- ✓ You will write a report on our camp or retreat..
- ✓ Only that you will look at our camp, retreat with magnifying glasses! Everything will be magnified:
- ✓ What is good becomes better and best and what is bad becomes worse and worst! In other words: be very enthusiastic in praising the good things of our camp or retreat, and likewise, very critical of the not so good things.

Personal Work:

Give them time to write the reports.

Group Work.

Reading of the Reports

- When their reports are ready the house will come together and sit in a circle.
- The reports are placed to the centre in a tray or box. The moderator picks any report at random and reads it.
- After each report is read there will be an interpretation. Through discussion and sharing of views, the report will be cut down to size and made more objective and closer to the truth. It will be looked at without magnifying glasses.
- The members of the house may try to guess who the author is.
- The author may or may not disclose his identity.
- When one report is over, the moderator reads a second report and so on till time is up

Group Analysis.

After the report reading and discussion is over, the moderator may ask the members verbally to reply to these or similar questions:

1. To your way of seeing things, what is the mood of the group about the camp, retreat, etc, What makes you say so?
2. What are the things people seem to have liked most and those they liked least?
3. Have any improvements been suggested by the group? Which?
4. What are the main gains most of us obtained in the Camp?
5. How was the cooperation of the participants at the camp, retreat etc.? How to improve on it?
6. Any follow-up wanted? Any suggestions about this?

Closing Prayer

End with a short prayer session