

OPENING SESSIONS

On Expectations

INTRODUCTION

It is important that at the start of the event – be a retreat, or a camp, or a seminar - the participants as well as the moderators know exactly what they are in for, in other words what to expect/. Many a failure is due to the fact that the participants are not aware of what the event is going to be, and what they are expected to.

It is helpful that at the very start of an event such things be clarified and brought into focus. This is the purpose of the introductory or opening session of any event.

For this reason , we offer here below six different sessions on expectations. Choose the one you deem best suited to the audience you are going to address. They are mostly designed to suit the needs of young audiences that might not be too much motivated for serious thinking and heavy work.

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1. Migration Game

introduction:

This type of opening session is suitable for all audiences, preferably for the young as it involves activity and some physical movement.

Migration games can combine very well with a session on expectations. The main purpose of the migration game is to make the participants reflect "why" people from different places have come together for an event. In trying to find the purpose of their coming together, we can make them reflect on their expectations and goals of the event about to start.

Migration games force the participants to think and to share with the group. Thus they break inhibitions and help towards group building.

Requirements:

A room big enough for the participants to move freely.
A big black board.

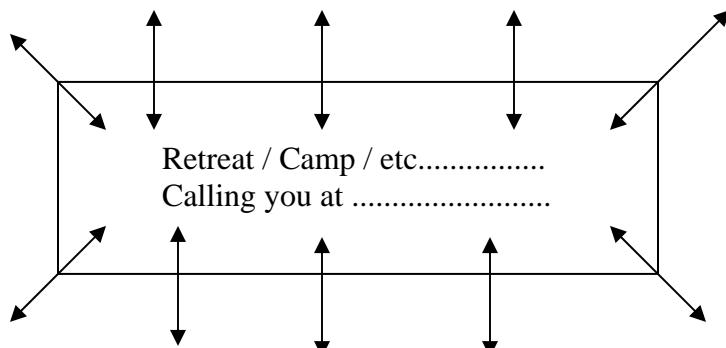
1. Getting Ready:

Meet the participants. Welcome them.

Sit in a semicircle; Keep the black board in front.

Hold a short introductory prayer with some singing.'

2. Draw on the board the diagram shown below:



Draw the diagram and explain it. The square represents the place we are in at this moment.

Write in block letters the name of the venue of or retreat.

- The arrows "pointing in" represent the participants coming into this group.
- The participants are asked to come forward to the board give their names, and write at the outside extremities of the arrows the names of the places or localities they came from.

3. Warming-up Exercise:

- Play the "Post Office Game" with the names of the places written on the board.
- There will be as many chairs available as participants, minus one standing the middle
- The one in the middle calls several names of places written on the board.
- Those coming from the place mentioned have to exchange seats. In the scramble for chairs, one will remain unseated. He in turn calls a few names of places and so on.

4. Personal Work :

All are requested to answer in writing and in silence the following questions:

1. What do the different names of localities or places signify?
2. What do the arrows "pointing in" signify?
3. What does the "retreat-or-camp-calling" signify?
4. What are the consequences of accepting the "retreat-or-camp-calling"?
5. What did you come for to the camp or retreat? What do you want from it?

5. Small Group Sharing and Consensus:

Split into small groups of 5 or 6.

Share the replies.

Arrive at a consensus answer for each question.

Secretary to write the consensus replies.

6. General Group Session:

Sharing of the consensus replies.

Write them on the board.

7. Input by the Moderator:

Based on the replies from the small groups.

Explain the nature of the camp or retreat.

Focusing the purpose and nature of camp or retreat they came in for.

Explain the norms and regulations for the event.

8. Short Prayer Session:

The migration game should end with a prayer session.

Let the moderator himself conduct this prayer session.

Do not omit the offering of the retreat or camp to God.

Make the participants write their promises to God for commitment and serious behavior at the camp or retreat. They can write a letter to God or use any other symbolic technique.

2. Simon Says

This session is meant for youth and youngsters, especially when thy are poorly motivated for the camp, retreat or seminar.

Introduction:

- ✓ It can be used not only as an opening session but also as a 'call to order' when the discipline of the group deteriorates.
- ✓ With tact, it can be used for grown-ups to impress on them on the need to adhere to the norms expected at the camp/retreat/ seminar.
- ✓ This exercise can help the participants to frame the rules and norms to be followed by all. Thus, this exercise would be sort of a training in responsible freedom.
- ✓ Once the rules have been framed by the participants themselves, **the moderator should both, abide by them and enforce them.**

1 . Getting Ready:

- All sit in a circle. Welcome the participants..
- Personal introductions and learning each other's names may follow.
- Introductory prayer and singing.

2. Group Dynamic Games. "Simon Says"

The moderator gives the following instructions:

From among the participants a leader will be elected or appointed.

Everybody will follow the instructions of the leader when they are preceded by words: "**Simon says**".

All have to do what Simon says until Simon says something else. e.g. sit, stand, clap hands, touch your head, etc. '

If the leader orders something without saying "Simon says" no one should change the previous instructions..

Anyone not following the rule of the game will be disqualified
The game will go on till most of the participants are disqualified.

3 Personal Work:

After the game, all will answer (*even those who might not have played the game*) the following questions, In writing:

1. Why did you play or not play the game?
2. What does the game signify?
3. Who do the players of the game stand for?
4. Who does Simon represent?
5. Why did the players follow him?
6. Why did many get disqualified from the game?
7. Do you see any relation between the game "Simon says" and our participating in our camp or retreat or event
8. Why did you come for our camp/retreat or event? What's your purpose?
9. Have you been forced to come for this camp/retreat/seminar or came on your own free will? Explain.
10. Are you willing to play the camp's or the retreat's game? Then, what have you to do?
11. Who is Simon, or the Simons in our camp/retreat?
12. Who may be disqualified?

4. General Session

Sharing of the replies.

Write them on the board.

5. Input:

- The retreat or camp is sort of a game. You are invited, not forced. to join the game.
- If you want to play the game you have to keep the rules of the game.
- If you do not want to keep the rules of the game, you are free to drop out.
- In our camp there are Simons: the Director, the Moderators, the Leaders, the Group Captains, etc.
- In our camp there will be rules. Let us frame them.

6. Framing of the Rules of Our Camp. Rules of Order and Discipline

In small groups or in a general group, discuss and frame the main rules for the camp or retreat:

- ✓ Rising and bed time.
- ✓ Times and places of silence and for personal reflection
- ✓ Common works to be shared by groups.
- ✓ Boundaries. Rooms. Meals.
- ✓ Work and involvement.
- ✓ Time-table.
- ✓ Any other.

7. Formal Acceptance of the Rules and Norms of our the Camp or Retreat.

Write them on the board.

Give a copy of them to one and all.

Each one promises in the presence of the other participants to observe the rules framed by the members for the group.

8. Prayer Session

End the session by a prayer.

You may have a Para- liturgical service offering the retreat or camp to God.

Ask a group of volunteers to devise a symbolic offering of the camp and of its rules. and of the promise to abide by them.

3. A Fantasy

1. Getting Ready

Introductory prayer and welcome.

Hold some activities such as Group Mixers - Learning each other's names or Ice breakers.

2. Relax and Quiet Down

All lie down, or sit in relaxed posture.

Lights off. Keep some moments of silence..

Breathing exercises or Awareness Exercises of sounds or of sensations..

3. Directed Fantasy

When relaxed, lead the participants through a fantasy relieving the time from the moment when decided to join the retreat or camp the camp till now.

Help them to be aware of their true feelings and expectations about the camp or retreat.

Tell the participants something like this.

- ✓ Remember the moment when you first came to know of this retreat or camp
- ✓ Who told you about it? When? How? Where? What were your feelings?
- ✓ Why did you decide to join this retreat or camp? Give your reasons?
- ✓ What were your expectations?
- ✓ Did you speak about this camp or retreat with your friends?
- ✓ What did you talk about? .What were, your plans?. Did you join because they did?
- ✓ Remember your preparations, your packing....What items have you brought for the camp or retreat? Why?
- ✓ What are your feelings now?
- ✓ What are now, your intentions and expectations?
- ✓ What would you like to get from this retreat or camp?

4. Personal Work (Put one the lights now)

In silence, alone before God, honestly, write on the following points:

1. What are my feelings now?
2. What did I come for to this camp or retreat?

3. What do I intend doing here?
What do I expect from this camp or retreat?
4. Am I ready to work hard and show my best behavior? How?

6. Group Session and Input

Sharing your reflections and jottings with the group.

Interaction.

Sorting out expectations.

Clarifying our goals.

Purifying our intentions.

7. Input.

The moderator will give a short instruction and exhortation on the goals of the camp or retreat, means and ways, time-table and norms to be followed.

8. Prayer Time.

End the session in prayer.

Promising the Lord seriousness, hard work and commitment.

4. Locks and Keys

For all types of audiences and events.

1. Getting Ready

- Introductory prayer and welcoming the participants
- Group Mixers
- Learning each other's name
- Ice-breakers

2. Sharing Expectations in Twos

- On slips of paper, draw some "locks", on an equal number of slips, draw some "Keys", keep them in a box in the centre of the group. Make sure that the total number of slips matches with the total number of participants.
- The Moderator will ask the participants to make a dip in the box and take one slip each. A lock will match, with a key. Thus, all will pair up.
- The pairs will talk for a while together on the following questions:
 1. Why I came for the retreat or camp?
 2. What are my expectations?
 3. What would I like to get out of this camp or retreat?
 4. What sort of behaviors may act as locks or keys for or against the success of our retreat or camp – ***blocking or opening our minds and hearts to God?***
Mention them.
- Ask them to write down their reflections and resolutions on how do they intend to open their hearts to God.

3. General Session:

- They will share their reflections.
- Their expectations and resolutions will be written on the board.
- A discussion may follow on how best to accomplish everybody's expectations and wishes:
- On how we can act as locks or keys blocking or helping others during the retreat.

4. Prayer Session:

- Offering of our camp or retreat to God.
- Personal promises and pledges.

5. Is The Religion Period Over?

Especially for groups coming poorly or wrongly motivated.

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1. Getting Ready

Introductory prayer and welcome.

Group Mixers, Learning each other's names techniques and Ice Breakers may help

2. F'ersonal Work

Let the participants answer the following questions in writing:

1. Why have I come for this retreat or camp?
2. What do I intend doing during this retreat, or camp? \
3. What are my expectations about this camp or retreat?

3. Group Work

Sharing of their replies.

Write their replies on the blackboard.

4. Moderator's Reaction: "Too Good to be True!"

Note for the moderator

More often than not, the replies given by the youngsters are too good to be true!

Their replies do not reflect what they really feel, think or intend doing during the camp, or retreat. Their replies reflect only what an ideal camper or retreatant "should feel, think and do."

Their replies are "bookish and stereotyped" not "personal" They come straight from their heads, not from their 'guts'.

Actually speaking, they gave us the answers we – moderators - would like to hear. Their true feelings and expectations- may remain concealed, even to them - beneath their beautiful replies.

In order to bring out their true feelings and motivation, I use to tell the participants the story: of **"Teacher, is the Religion Period Over?"**

A class teacher soon after the Religion class, without mentioning it, started straight away her English language period. Without telling her children that the religion period was

over, she told them to write an essay on: "*If I were to get a crore of rupees, what would I do?*"

While reading the essays aloud to the children, she was struck by their generosity. One wrote: "I would build a hospital, for the poor" Another wrote "I would look after hundreds of orphan children. Still other: "I would help the lepers" etc.

The teacher congratulated the kids for being so loving and charitable.

One child asked: "Teacher is the Religion period over? "Yes," she said.

The child answered: "Oh, then, it's different!"

The teacher guessing what the child meant to say, told the children: "Now, Children, I want you to write the same essay not during the Religion class, but during the English period"

The children's essays were now quite different. One wrote: "I would get a crore of rupees; I would go for a pleasure trip around the world for a full year...!" Another: "I would stop studying, and I begin enjoying life," etc.....

5. Reflection

After you tell them the story - with some enlargements - question your audience. Can you see any similarity between the answers given by those children in their Religion period, and your answers written on the board?

Keep discussing the consequences of the story and their application to our present moment.

Honestly, deep down in your hearts, what your true intentions, motivation and feelings are about your retreat or camp?

6 Personal Work:

Write anew your answers to the questions given to you before, but now write them in the English class! We want real and honest answers.

1. Why have I come for this retreat or camp?
2. What do I intend doing during this retreat, or camp?
3. What are my expectations about this camp or retreat?

6. Group Work:

Share your new answers.

Compare them with the old ones. *They are written on the board!*

Now, honestly, discuss and as a group decide

1. What should we aim at during our retreat or camp?
2. How to correct and straighten up our former, mistaken intentions?
3. What would be reasonable expectations?
4. What honest promises shall we make to God for a good retreat or camp?

7. Prayer Session

Offering of our camp or retreat to God.

Our promises and pledges.

6. Check! Check Your Baggage!

*For youngsters and youth coming poorly or wrongly motivated.
It may prove helpful to straighten up their wrong motivation,*

1. Getting Ready

Introductory prayer and welcome.

Some Group Mixers, Learning each other's Names Exercises and Ice-breakers may help.

2. Personal Work.

Request the participants to answer the following questions in writing:

1. What is this retreat/camp meant for?
2. Why have you come for this retreat/camp
3. What do you intend, doing during this retreat/camp?
4. What are your- expectations?

3. Group Work

Sharing their replies.

Writing a list, of them on the black-board.

Any comments.

4. Personal Work: Check your Baggage

Request the participants to be honest.

Promise them complete anonymity and privacy. Secrecy will be kept.

Tell them now to write in a piece of paper – anonymously - without your name - a complete list of all the items they brought with them in their bags for the retreat or camp:

- ✓ Books and their titles.... Magazines....Comics....give details.
- ✓ Indoor or outdoor games... Describe them.
- ✓ Cigarettes:.. Eats and drinks.....give details
- ✓ Mobiles.....C. D. players, etc./

Now fold your slips of paper and keep them in a box in the middle of the room.

5. Group Reflection and Sharing

Demand seriousness

The moderator will read aloud - according to his discretion – some of the items mentioned in the slips. No clues at all should be given.

The group will be asked to reflect

- Considering the items brought to the Retreat or Camp, do the answers written on the board truly reflect the motives, goals and expectations of our group as such?
- Do some of the items mentioned in your lists tally with your replies written on the blackboard?

The moderator will explain the participants the difference between notional knowledge and "heart-felt" knowledge.

Our answers to the questions above were bookish, notional.

The items we brought speak of our true, ‘heart-felt’ motives and expectations. Deeds speak louder than words. If we really want to make a good retreat/camp let us set for ourselves sensible goals and objectives.

6..Group Work: Framing goals and norms for our retreat or camp:

- **Goals and objectives:** Suggest, discuss and decide what goals and objectives would be reasonable for our retreat or camp
- **Norms and rules:** What would be sensible norms and rules to follow during our Retreat or camp?
- **Expectations:** What would be realistic expectations for our Group? .

Write them on the blackboard

Remember: *Once the goals and objective, norms and rules have been framed by the participants themselves, the moderator should both, abide by them and enforce them.*

7. Prayer Session

Offering of the retreat/camp to God.

Shared prayer.

Offering of our resolutions.

Asking for God's help to keep our promises.