

Villages

MB 2023

OVERVIEW:

Villages is a time where group bonding and sharing is paramount. It is a safe environment for students to open up to a group and learn about each other. Villages is facilitated in a way that ensures that everyone is within their comfort zone and able to participate in any way that suits them.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Be more accepting of their peers.
- Identify commonalities of people in their group.
- Form new positive social relationships.

VOCABULARY:

Villages

Community

The Four Agreements

MATERIALS:

Specific materials are outlined in activity breakdowns

PROCEDURES:

1. CULTIVATING THE VILLAGES ATMOSPHERE

- Before beginning your Villages sessions for the week, it is important to set some expectations in the interest of creating a safe and welcoming space. Start by talking about what a **village** is (a community of people who share culture and lifestyle).
- Why do students think it is important to have a **community**? (Create platforms for support and bonding).
- Introduce Villages and explain the purpose of doing a Villages activity: "This week our cabin will be working together in this small group so we can help each other learn and learn from each other. We will meet daily with our cabin group for an activity that will help us do that." Discuss with students what they need to feel safe or trusting in a group.
- Guide them towards **The Four Agreements** of Villages. These agreements are meant to create a safe space for students to listen and share. These agreements will be reviewed at the beginning of each session.
 - Right to pass:* Students have the right to pass if they are not comfortable sharing. That being said, if they feel comfortable sharing later in the session, they are welcome to.
 - Appropriate:* Conversation and topics should be kept appropriate. When sharing vulnerable information, the lines of appropriateness can get blurred. If a student is concerned about keeping things appropriate but feels compelled to share, they can seek you out after the session.
 - Attentive listening:* When they are not actively sharing with the group, students should be attentive listeners. It is alright if they need a moment to collect their thoughts once their turn comes if they have spent their time listening intently.
 - Keep it in the Village:* The information shared with this village was shared because the members felt safe in sharing. Taking sensitive information outside of the group is not our right, and it violates the agreements and members of this village.
- Ask students to give you a verbal contract if they accept the Four Agreements. If they don't yet feel comfortable agreeing, keep the conversation going with additional group expectations and discussion.
- Once everyone is in agreement, lead the group into that session's Villages prompt. *Additionally, identify student highlights from the day like animal sightings, fun anecdotes, etc. Use the village as a forum to troubleshoot issues if necessary and offer praise for accomplishments.*

2. FIRST DAY VILLAGES: The first official Villages activity should be accessible and non-threatening. The following activities are designed to prime students to share in future sessions.

Activity: Spiderweb

Materials: 1 ball of yarn, 1 stuffed animal

Time: 30 minutes

Procedures:

N: Spiderweb

O: Having the group share common traits on their first time together to illustrate interconnectedness.

I: Have the group sit in a circle on the floor. Place the ball of yarn in the center. Go around the circle having each person say something that they like. After each student, everyone in the circle that likes that thing passes the yarn across the circle. This will make a web connecting everyone. The web stays intact until everyone in the group has shared something (everyone that wants to share). After everyone has a turn, put one object on the web such as a soft ball or stuffed animal. Have the group toss the object in the air using the web. This will demonstrate the strength of the group and their bonds.

S: Be appropriate and honest

E: Teamwork makes the dream work!

Debrief: What are some things you have in common with each other? What will you take away from this activity? How will you treat each other differently after learning a bit about everyone?

Activity: Two Truths and a Lie

Materials: N/A

Time: 20 minutes

Procedures:

N: Two Truths and a Lie

O: Share things about ourselves.

I: Have students think of two fun facts about themselves and one made-up fact. Students take turns sharing their two truths and one lie in any order. The rest of the group takes turns guessing which fact is not true.

S: Be honest and keep it appropriate.

E: You can't handle the truth!

Debrief: You know each other from school, but were you surprised to hear what was true about your friends? Was it easy to think of a lie?

Activity: Message in a Bottle (setup)

Materials: Letters written by previous cabin members

Time: 5 minutes (not a replacement for a full Villages Activity)

Procedures:

N: Receiving a Message from a Bottle

O: Having new students comforted by the experience of former students.

I: Distribute one letter to each student. Have students read the letter written by the previous cabin member. Frontload that they will be writing a similar letter at the end of the week.

S: Be honest, stay appropriate.

E: Be creative!

- 3. MID-WEEK VILLAGES:** By mid-week, your Villages should feel a little bit more comfortable with sharing personal information and supporting one another. The following prompts add more variety and opportunities for creative and purposeful input.

Activity: Magic Spots

Materials: *journals, writing utensils*

Time: 15 minutes (plus destination hiking)

Procedures:

N: Magic Spots

O: Magic Spots is a chance for each person to develop a relationship with nature.

I: Setup a meeting location and a noise or signal to regroup students after the activity. Actively place students along the trail so they have a tree to sit against. If you have a highly advanced group, create boundaries for students, in which they can choose a place to sit. Give students 5-10 minutes to be creative in their Magic Spot. This can include writing, drawing, or general reflecting.

S: Require students to be ten or more steps away from one another to prevent talking. Frontload an activity or prompt for students to complete while sitting at their Magic Spot.

E: There is magic everywhere!

Debrief: What did you hear/see while at your Magic Spot? What did you notice that you would have previously overlooked? Debrief individual sensory awareness activity if you gave an assignment.

Activity: Finger Stories

Materials: *N/A*

Time: 30 minutes

Procedures:

N: Finger Stories

O: Having students share information about themselves with the group.

I: Have the students show a random number of fingers (1-5). Have students tell one story about themselves for each finger they showed the group. Theme the question or use the numbers to have students share in a particular order instead of sharing that number of stories. (example of themes: one finger means a story about a trip you took, two fingers is a story that happened at school, if you have three fingers, think of a story that happened in an after-school program, a story about family, sports, with a friend, etc). If group size is large, limit stories to one each – emphasize a significant event in your own life to demonstrate epic individuality.

S: Be honest and keep it appropriate.

E: How many fingers am I holding up?

Debrief: Do you feel like you are getting to know your friends better? Did you find any commonalities with anyone in the group? How did you feel after you shared your stories?

Activity: Your Proudest Moment

Materials: *N/A*

Time: 30 minutes

Procedures:

N: Your Proudest Moment

O: Give students time to think of and share their proudest moment with the village.

I: Give students the prompt and then ample time to recall their Proudest Moment. Pride is a flexible concept that can encompass many different accomplishments and moments.

S: Be honest and keep it appropriate

E: What makes you proud?

Debrief: How did it make you feel to remember that moment? How does that inspire you to act in the future? What will you do at High Trails that will make you proud? How can you show that you are proud of others?

Activity: The Crossword

Materials: *masking tape, markers*

Time: 15 minutes

Procedures:

N: The Crossword

O: Having students share thoughts and feelings with the group.

I: Give everyone a piece of tape and a marker. Have the students write something they like about High Trails or how they are feeling on the tape. Have one person put their piece of tape on the floor. The next person must agree with the first piece of tape then attach it to the floor so they intersect like a crossword puzzle. Every additional person can add their tape to the puzzle as long as they agree with the pieces they intersect with.

S: Be honest and keep it appropriate.

E: Have fun!

Debrief: Did people enjoy similar things or different ones? How does everyone feel about his or her week at High Trails? What will you take away from this activity?

Activity: Feelings in a Hat

Materials: *paper, pencils, and hat*

Time: 30 minutes

Procedures:

N: Feelings in a Hat

O: Having students share thoughts and feelings with the group.

I: Give everyone a piece of paper and writing utensil. Have the students write one feeling that describes how they are doing. They do not write their names. Collect pieces of paper in hat. Instructor randomly passes one feeling out to each member of the group. Students describe how someone could feel that way.

S: Frontload and screen for appropriate content before students begin sharing.

E: How are you feeling?

Debrief: Do you think you have a clearer view of how everyone else is feeling in the group? What can you change now that you know how everyone else feels in our cabin? What are two extra guidelines we can make to help everyone feel comfortable in the cabin community?

Activity: The Blob

Materials: *N/A*

Time: 15 minutes

Procedures:

N: The Blob

O: Instructor creates a scenario requiring students to work together to create a "monster".

I: The first round, students work together to make a monster with half as many legs and a third as many arms touching the ground as the group has all together. (cabin of 12: 6 legs, 4 arms...cabin of 15: 8 legs, 5 arms...etc.). If the group succeeds, congratulate, and see if they can morph into a monster with varying numbers of legs, arms, elbows, noses, etc. touching the ground.

S: Choose a safe area and frontload a freeze command.

E: *Ahhhh!* Its Blobzilla!

Debrief: Could you do this activity by yourself? How did you succeed? What is important when you are working as a team?

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- 4. LAST DAY VILLAGES:** This is the culmination of your meaningful facilitation. At this point in the week, students have shared aspects of their personalities and feelings in various formats. The following activities are designed to properly wrap up the experience in an impactful and lasting manner.

Activity: Warm Fuzzy Acronym

Materials: paper, markers, tape

Time: 30 minutes

Procedures:

N: Warm Fuzzy Acronym

O: Having students reflect on their experience with each other.

I: Give everyone a piece of paper and a marker. Have the students write their names on the long side of the paper like an acronym. Have everyone write an acronym for their name. For example, Ian is:

I-Intelligent

A-Awesome

N-Navigator

Pass the acronyms around the group, have each student write something nice about each person on the paper with their acronym. Share what was written with the group.

S: Be honest and keep it kind.

E: Don't you feel all warm inside?

Debrief: How do you feel after getting so many compliments? How has this series of Villages' activities affected you? What will you do differently when interacting with people thanks to Villages?

Activity: The Wave Goodbye

Materials: paper, markers

Time: 15 minutes

Procedures:

N: The Wave Goodbye

O: Having students reflect on their experiences at High Trails.

I: Give everyone a piece of paper and a marker, or just a marker. Have the students trace their hand on the piece of paper or just write on their hand directly. Have students write responses to the following questions on each finger:

Pinky Finger: Write your favorite class that you experienced this week.

Ring Finger: Write something new that you tried this week.

Middle Finger: Write the name of a new friend that you made this week.

Index Finger: Write the biggest challenge you faced this week.

Thumb: Write the thing you will miss the most about High Trails.

If students finish early, have them draw a picture on the palm of their hand.

S: Be honest, be kind, be appropriate.

E: Bye!

Debrief: Ask for volunteers to share their responses. Focus on the similarities between students and encourage students. What are *your* answers to these questions?

Activity: Paper Back Writer

Materials: paper, tape, markers

Time: 15 minutes

Procedures:

N: Paper Back Writer

O: Having students reflect on their experiences at High Trails with each other.

I: Give everyone a piece of paper and a marker. Have the students write their name on the paper and have a buddy tape that paper to their back. When all students have their papers on their backs, prompt students that they may take their markers and write their favorite memories of the person on their back. Prompt them with appropriate memories you know they made together, like funny jokes from campfire, when they saw their friends as leaders, or the goofy new inside jokes they may have with one another.

S: Make sure that contributions are appropriate and supportive.

E: Be kind!

Debrief: Ask for volunteers to share their responses and favorite memories. This may trigger other memories from High Trails for others.

Activity: Message in a Bottle

Materials: paper, markers, bottle

Time: 30 minutes

Procedures:

N: Leaving a Message in a Bottle

O: Having students reflect on their experiences at High Trails.

I: Give everyone a piece of paper and a marker. Have the students write an uplifting letter to a future cabin member describing what you found hard but overcame and what you enjoyed the most about High Trails. Encourage students to draw a picture on their letter too. Have students put their letter into the bottle for future groups. (Note: have students leave the date off the letters in case you have to reuse them multiple times).

S: Make sure that contributions are appropriate and supportive as it will directly affect the experience of a future student.

E: What do you want to tell a future student?

Debrief: Why is it important to write these letters? Do you feel like your opinion of High Trails has changed from the beginning of the week to the end? How does it feel to help someone else adjust to a new week at High Trails? Do you feel like you helped one another through this week?

5. WRAPPING UP THE VILLAGES EXPERIENCE: Now that you have spent a week with your village, and shared meaningful things with one another. It is important to end things on a high note. Students do not earn their Villages bead until the final session has wrapped. You can use this culmination of sharing and camaraderie to create a very meaningful bead ceremony:

- A. Similar to Adventure Course, distribute beads but inform students that the beads belong to somebody else in the group.
- B. Encourage them to look around the group and think about ways that each member has contributed to the group.
- C. When they are ready, go around and have students give beads to people they want to acknowledge and give a reason that they are a positive member of the village.
- D. *Time permitting:* Once somebody receives their bead, you can open it up to the group to provide additional positive reinforcement to that student. To protect emotional safety, frontload that the student receiving praise can opt out if they don't feel comfortable with that sort of attention.
- E. Once everybody receives their beads, wrap the final Villages session by sharing your feeling and thanking the group. Illustrate that Villages exist in many forms and that they should always be on the lookout for a people to support.