

CORNERSTONE 2022 RESOURCE

Songs, Stories and Sacredness, *Wind Down Your Day*

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| AUTHOR(S): | Sarra Alpert |
| SUMMARY: | In this session we will: connect through the music and writing that inspires us. |
| ABC GOALS: | <p>Affective: Participants will feel...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More comfortable bringing a wide range of sources into text study. • Empowered to teach the texts that they love. <p>Behavior: Participants will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring texts (of many types) into reflection activities. • Lead text study with more confidence. <p>Cognitive: Participants will know...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New frameworks and tools for text study. • New connection points between texts (of many types) and reflection/processing. |
| AUDIENCE: | Can be any size and can be adapted to facilitate this activity for any age. |
| TIMING: | 45 minutes |
| APPENDICES: | Text handout |
| MATERIALS NEEDED: | Whatever is needed to display the texts – A/V if there's sound or video, paper text if needed for readings/texts/etc |
| SET-UP DETAILS: | A relatively quiet space so that people can hear the texts easily. Otherwise, no particular space needs (unless you have A/V needs, see above). |

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – Introductory share
- 00:05-00:15 – Participate in group text study with a song
- 00:15-00:25 - Teach text study tools
- 00:25-00:35 – Chevruta text study
- 00:35-00:45 – Closing activity

SESSION OUTLINE:

00:00-00:05 – Introductory share

- Welcome the group and explain that “text” in this context is anything that anyone has created for others to engage with. That can include traditional Jewish texts but also movies, music, visual art, memes, fiction, poetry, essays, TV shows, podcasts, and on and on. In the context of this session, we’re especially looking at texts that we find help to ask a meaningful reflection question or set up a meaningful reflection context.
- Have everyone introduce themselves by sharing a text (using the definition above) that they especially love and find meaningful as a reflection portal.

00:05-00:15 – Participate in group text study

- Explain that you’re about to play two songs and that everyone should get comfortable (feel free to lie down), close their eyes and just listen. They can feel free to listen for words or phrases that especially resonate or touch them in some way.
- Play “You Are Not Alone” by Mavis Staples and Jeff Tweedy and “Crowded Table” by The Highwomen.
- Give out the lyrics (or display them on a projector). Introduce “Lectio Divina” (a Christian practice that means “divine reading” and which is adapted here towards universal use):
 - Read the text out loud more than once, slowly (in this case, the playing of the songs can serve as one reading).
 - Choose a word or phrase that touches your heart (it can be a different word or phrase for each participant).
 - How do you see that word or phrase touching your life today? What about it is resonating or bringing something up for you?
 - What do you see the text (or maybe just the word or phrase you chose from the text) as calling you to do or become?

00:15-00:25 - Teach text study tools

- Start with some key frameworks for how we can engage with texts:
 - There are so many ways to engage with text! No method is right or wrong - they all just lead us along different pathways. For example:
 - Discussion about the text and its ideas.
 - Artistic representation of the text and the ideas you find in it.
 - The Bibliodrama/Storahelling approach - act out scenes from the texts or dramatically embody the characters and further draw out what they’re experiencing and how they might feel about it.
 - Midrash (or fan fiction!) - create your own offshoot from the text that continues the story or fills in a gap in the narrative.
 - Debate - have different people learn different texts that have conflicting ideas and then engage in a debate with each text represented.
 - What else?
 - Make sure to make the texts accessible: offer translations, key context, etc.
 - Teach texts that you find meaningful -- and at some point in the session, share with your learners about what that text means to you.

CORNERSTONE 2022 RESOURCE

- Invite personal connection to the text and personal reflection, but don't require it -- allow learners to set their own pace and build trust.
- When using any of these approaches as an end-of-day reflective tool, the main point is to choose a text that brings up the themes you're trying to point people towards (based on how you spend that day).
- Share some practices you can use to engage with a text (not all of these formats work for all texts - consider the type of text as well as the goal of your program when deciding which ones feel most relevant):
- You / Me / Us:
 - What do you think the creator of this text is trying to share with us? What do they seem to care about?
 - What in this text resonates for you personally?
 - What in this text do you think is meaningful or important for your community (or for everybody) to know or think about or hear?
- Know / Learn / Want:
 - What did I know about this topic before I read this text?
 - What did I learn about this topic from this text?
 - What new questions do I have? / What does this make me want to learn more about?
- Pardes (a Jewish text study practice with four levels of delving more and more deeply into the text):
 - Pshat (simple or literal): Restate what the text is saying (on its most literal level) and talk through any clarifying questions.
 - Remez (hint): What do you think the text is implying? For example, is there a broader idea or principle that the text's creator might be implying through their particular examples or characters or situations?
 - Drash (concept or interpretation): Expand on the text's ideas. What do you think it means? Why are the ideas valuable? What about the ideas trouble you or present something you might want to argue with? Where do these ideas lead you?
 - Sod (secret): What feels hidden in the text? What other ideas does the text connect to (that might not be named)? What do you know about the context in which the text was created (or about the person who created it, or the people who are represented in it) and how do you think that potentially influences the text's ideas, or how does that context affect the way you personally engage with the text?
- Lectio Divina (a Christian practice that means "divine reading" - the version written here is adapted towards universal use):
 - Read the text out loud more than once, slowly.
 - Choose a word or phrase that touches your heart (it can be a different word or phrase for each participant).
 - How do you see that word or phrase touching your life today? What about it is resonating or bringing something up for you?
 - What do you see the text (or maybe just the word or phrase you chose from the text) as calling you to do or become?

00:25-00:35 – Chevruta text study

- Offer a set of texts as well as the text study tools. Split into chevruta (study pairs) where each pair can choose one text and one tool to work with.
- Study in chevruta.

00:35-00:45 – Closing activity

- Ask everyone to journal for a few minutes about a text from their past that helped them understand something about their own life differently.
- To close, have a few people read or play those examples aloud.

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP:

- Bear in mind that the texts should be tailored to the age group you're working with as well as any other needs for that specific population.
- Another option for this sort of activity that can be lovely and less study-oriented is to have a regular end-of-day ritual where a different community member shares a text that's meaningful to them, either by reading it or playing it, and saying a little bit about what it means to them. Even if the specific text doesn't connect to the activities of that day, it still functions as a beautiful way to practice meaning-making, learn more about each other, and ease into a more relaxed and receptive end-of-day headspace.