

The Power of Friendship Bracelets

AUTHOR(S): Ellie Agulnek

SUMMARY:

This Prayerful Moment explores the significance of friendship bracelets as art that we routinely create and challenges participants to question how we can infuse more meaning into the activities that we already do at camp.

GOALS:

- Participants will reflect on identities, values, and relationships that are important to them
- Participants will create a friendship bracelet that reflects those identities/values/relationships and develop an understanding of the importance of art to foster connections
- Participants will wind down their day with a quiet, mindful activity and group discussion

AUDIENCE:

Fellows and supervisors, 20-30 people total

TIMING:

45 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Friendship bracelet string (~100 skeins, aka one of the buckets/large packs that we have in the closet)
- Elastic bracelet string (2 rolls)
- Pony beads (1 bin)
- Letter beads (and in hebrew) (~200)
- Any other cute beads/charms we have
- Scissors (10 if possible!)
- Clipboards (30)
- Duct tape (3 rolls – we will not use all of it!)
- Printer paper (50ish)
- Markers (50ish)

SET-UP:

Location: an indoor room with chairs and a table for supplies. Having couches would also be great! Tables to sit at are not necessary but are fine.

Setup: Spread out some of the bracelet supplies on a table for easier access. Have paper, markers, and the clipboards in easy reach to pass out to participants.

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – *Introductions, quick icebreaker game*
- 00:05-00:15 – *Explanation and Individual Reflection*
- 00:15-00:35 – *Activity*
- 00:35-00:45 – *Debrief/Closing Group Discussion*

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:05 Intro and Icebreaker

Session leader welcomes participants and introduces themselves. Play "Where the Wind Blows" to do introductions.

Where the Wind blows: everyone is in a circle with one person standing in the middle. The person in the middle says their name, pronouns, and then "the wind blows to..." and comes up with a fun fact about themselves. If others have that in common, they must run to find a new spot in the circle. The middle person also rejoins the circle. The person without a spot is now in the middle, and the game repeats.

Examples:

- The wind blows to everyone who... likes Marvel
- ... has been to 3 or more countries
- ... prefers tea over coffee
- ... loves sushi

00:05-00:15 Explanation and Individual Reflection

Session leader introduces the topic of the session. This first section is time for individual reflection, and there will be an activity and group discussion later.

Participants will be given paper and markers. The following questions will be asked, leaving about 1-2 minutes of thinking time in between each question. Participants can jot down what they're thinking, draw a picture, whatever they want; this is just for them to reflect. Play chill music.

- What does friendship mean to you?
- How do you prioritize the different relationships you have?
- What are some identities that affect the relationships you have?
- When have you felt connected to those around you? What made you feel that way?
- What comes to mind when you think of mindfulness?
- How do you express yourself?
- What has your experience been with bracelet making, at camp and beyond?

00:15-00:35 Activity

Short group discussion (~3 min). Ask people to share why art is meaningful to them.

Have participants consider the ways that people infuse different meanings and have different reasons for creating art: it can be a way to express identities, develop relationships, calm down/recenter, pass time, etc.

We often make friendship bracelets at camp and don't think too much about it. Now, we're going to reframe that activity. Pick one meaning and focus on that in making a bracelet for

yourself or a friend. It can be an identity/value important to you that you want to express, a bracelet for a friend (again focusing on an identity/value), a bracelet representing an important person/place in your life, or something similar. Participants have the creative freedom to choose what exactly they want to do.

Give participants ~15 minutes to work on their bracelets and play music.

00:35-00:45 Debrief/Closing Group Discussion

Bring the group back together. Participants can share the meaning behind the bracelet they made if they wish to. Then, ask closing questions, adapting as the group talks.

- Did it feel different to make a bracelet with a specific identity/relationship/value in mind? How so?
- How do you authentically express yourself?
- How do you make meaning in life? In art?
- How do you hold space for what is important to others?
- How can you be aware (shema – hear, listen) of the routine things that you do?
- What does prayer mean to you? How can art be a form of prayer? Of community building? Of connecting to others?

Connect the activity to infusing meaning into the “routine” things that we do and the role that bracelet making as art and as a routine has in forming a community.

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

Ways to adapt this program to your camp:

- Pair off campers/participants. For 5-10 minutes, they answer questions to get to know the other person. Then, they make a bracelet for the other person that represents something meaningful they learned about them
- Instead of bracelets, switch to other forms of art, like pottery, drawing+painting, woodworking, etc
- TWIST! Halfway through making the bracelet, switch with another person and continue making their bracelet based on the identity/value/relationship they chose

APPENDIX A

Personal Reflection Questions

- What does friendship mean to you?
- How do you prioritize the different relationships you have?
- What are some identities that affect the relationships you have?
- When have you felt connected to those around you? What made you feel that way?
- What comes to mind when you think of mindfulness?
- How do you express yourself?
- What has your experience been with bracelet making, at camp and beyond?

APPENDIX B

Group Discussion Questions

- Did it feel different to make a bracelet with a specific identity/relationship/value in mind? How so?
- How do you authentically express yourself?
- How do you make meaning in life? In art?
- How do you hold space for what is important to others?
- How can you be aware (shema – hear, listen) of the routine things that you do?
- What does prayer mean to you? How can art be a form of prayer? Of community building? Of connecting to others?