



Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

October 2017

Topical Activity

Sharing about us



The aim of this Topical Activity is to support children and adults to share about their lives outside Quakers. Young people who have attended Children's Meeting often cherish most their memories of sharing with adults: this Activity offers a framework for doing this. It could be spread out over several weeks to allow people to prepare, or it could be an activity without any planning at all!

'Be aware of the Spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?' Advices and Queries 7.

Preparation: Talk with your co-facilitators so you all have something to discuss and are ready to help the discussion. We all have many things we could talk about - choose what to share, bearing in mind the likely group, possible activities and connections to your Quaker faith. See ideas under 'Activity' and prepare. If you have a settled group of children you could invite them to think and prepare.



Gather: Prepare a centrepiece – flowers, pebbles, leaves, a bowl of water – a candle if that feels safe for your group. Ask everyone to sit in a circle; make sure everyone knows each other's names. Introduce a period of stillness in words with which you are comfortable, for instance: 'We are going to begin our meeting today with a little time of stillness to help us to be ready to listen to ourselves and to each other. Be still for a moment with your eyes closed or looking at the flowers'. If the children have already been in Meeting for Worship simply make sure in a circle that everyone knows names and move on into the game.

Game: Sitting in a circle, everyone needs to jump up if they share the characteristic called out. You call out statements that might be true for some or all of the group e.g. 'I live in ...' 'There's a B in my name', 'I came to Quakers today', 'I like chips', 'I'm wearing blue socks.' Older children may like to call out ideas. Shift to talk about activities e.g. 'I like to play football' 'I enjoy reading' 'I have a pet cat' 'I've climbed a mountain' 'I make good cakes'.

Sharing: In the circle invite everyone to tell the group something that they enjoy doing when they're not at Quakers. It might be a hobby, something they've done with family or a topic that interests them. If anyone is unsure prompt by asking what games they enjoy, what they might choose to do on a Sunday afternoon, what they like best at school or what they do with friends. One of the adults shares first; follow this pattern of asking questions to guide the discussion, adapting the questions to the person talking. A key part is listening; you may need to prompt this using questions like these:

- What is the activity you want to tell us about? What do you do? Where?
- How did you first get interested in this? Did you make a conscious decision to do this?
- How often do you do this? Can you do it as much as you want to?
- Do you do it with other people or alone?
- Is it difficult? Is it fun?
- Do you improve your skills as you practise?

- How do you feel when you do this? (Excited? Proud? Calm? Happy? Does concentrating on this help you to 'lose' yourself? Do you do this mindfully?).
- Do you feel you do this differently to other people because you're a Quaker?
- Does doing this help your Quaker faith?

The children may not have thought of any value base or spiritual aspect of what they enjoy doing; you may be able to guide them. For instance: team sports, dance or playing in an orchestra demand awareness of other people, sharing and helping. Learning any skill requires hard work and concentration. Caring for an animal needs responsibility and love. Learning about people, nature, the world, science or the universe will all inspire awe and wonder. A lot of fiction or computer games is based on the battle between good and evil, on the struggle for life and hope. Computer games require the player to make choices about how they interact with others and what their aim is. Being a fan takes dedication – even in the bad times! Children may be caught up in friendships, with tensions as well as joy: there are choices to be made.



You will need to be flexible, depending on the size of the group and how much people want to share. Conversation may be all anyone wants to do and you may all find out fascinating things about each other and reflect on your own interests. Or you may move on to an activity.



Activity: How can you share your topic? Teach the group a song or a dance or a greeting in a different language or some yoga postures. Bring your musical instrument and make music together. Bake cakes. Plant seeds. Show the children how to use water colours. Read a poem and help the children to write their own poems. Bring examples of your collection and let the children hold and explore the items. Teach everyone to juggle, or crochet or to do quadratic equations. Taste honey from your bees or veg from your garden. Go outside and practise ball skills or spot birds.

If you are in work you may want to talk about your job – what you do, why, the effect on you and on the community of your work.

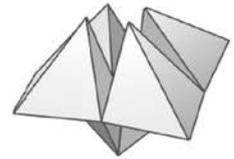
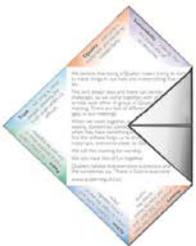
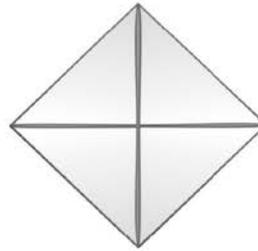
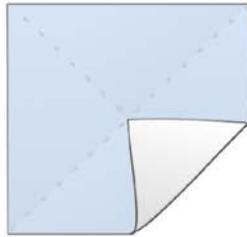
An extension activity is to design a survey so the children can ask everyone in Meeting what their job is (or was). A subsequent session could look at the information – are there types of work that Friends do? Why? Do the children have ideas about the sort of work they might hope to do? Why?

For older children you could share any campaigning or political work you do. What motivates you? The group could think about causes they care about. Are there ways children can engage?

Another extension is to offer the children the opportunity to share an activity on a subsequent week. You may need to help them to work out what to do and to design and resource an activity.



The children could make a chatterbox, filling in the spaces with words or pictures about their activity. The Quaker chatterbox gives a template. (For this free resource contact cypadmin@quaker.org.uk for copies). Make the chatterbox, unfold and put words or pictures in the right sections. To play, ask a Friend to pick one of the words or pictures and open and close your chatterbox according to the number of letters in that word. Then ask your Friend to pick a picture from the four they can see. See if they can guess what it is/how you do it – the answer will be underneath the flap. The children could take them to play with Friends in main Meeting.



Close: Gather everyone in a circle around your chosen centrepiece. Remind the group that the hope was to listen to ourselves and each other; maybe summarise something of what you have learned about each other, or invite the children to say what they have learned. You could close with a short time of quiet. If the children will be talking to the main Meeting about what they've been doing help them to prepare what they want to say.



This Topical Activity was written by Alison Mitchell and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden.