

Youth Frontiers Kindness Retreat Prep Pack

Preparation information to ensure a successful retreat experience



Complimentary posters for your school to help deepen the impact of the retreat

Kindness Retreat Preparation Checklist

Youth Frontiers Retreats

Now that your retreat date is set, you will need to complete each item in the checklist below to ensure the success of your retreat. If you have questions, please call us at 952.922.0222 or toll-free at 888.992.0222.

1 Book a facility

- Booking an off-site facility is optional but recommended for Kindness Retreats.
- If you reserve an off-site facility, a large carpeted room in a community center, church, synagogue, banquet center, hotel conference room, or similar facility works best.
- Arrange transportation to and from the retreat site.

2 Find small group leaders

- Leaders are required and have a huge impact on the quality of your retreat.
- There must be 1 leader for every 5-8 students. (Preferred ratio is 1:6.)
- You may use adults (parents, community leaders, or PTA volunteers). You may also use high school students as leaders for the retreat. They must be at least two years older than the students on retreat.
- It is best that teachers and school staff do not serve as small group leaders.
- Leaders must arrive at 45 minutes prior to the retreat start time for a leader orientation.

3 Create small groups

- Students will participate in small group discussions during the retreat, and each small group will consist of 5-8 students and at least one small group leader.
- Divide students into groups before the retreat and create nametags with small group numbers.

4 Plan lunch (and an optional snack)

- Plan to arrange lunch for the retreat participants. Please remember to account for the small group leaders (or be sure to inform leaders to bring their own lunch).
- Bag lunch is preferred, rather than something that is hot or time-sensitive (like pizza), as lunch time needs to remain flexible.
- If your retreat requires an overnight stay for YF staff, lunch must be provided for them as well.

5 Inform teachers, staff, and parents

- Inform teachers and staff that they will be expected to actively participate during the retreat (see sample letter).
- Inform parents about the retreat (see sample letter).
- Ask the school counselor and/or school psychologist to attend the retreat to help students process the day's experience after the retreat is over.
- Look into inviting Youth Frontiers out to provide a Parent Talk, to help parents understand and follow-up on their child's experience.

ONE MONTH PRIOR TO RETREAT:

6 Complete the YF Priority One form

- Your YF Priority One form will be emailed to you by the YF Retreat Coordinator six weeks prior to your retreat.
- You may complete the YF Priority One form online at www.youthfrontiers.org by clicking on the "Clients" bubble, then "Before Your Retreat" under the "Courage" tab; or fax a completed hard copy to Youth Frontiers at 952.922.2122.

Kindness Retreat Overview

Youth Frontiers Retreats

Length 5 hours
Maximum # 150 participants

General Schedule:

- Welcome and group-building activities
- Introduction to the theme of the day
- Small group activity: time to process the message from the introduction
- Large group activity
- Presentation: topic-based talk titled: *Bullying Hurts*
- Small group discussion: processing time
- Lunch
- Large group activity
- Presentation: topic-based talk titled: *Be a Hero—Be Kind*
- Small group discussion: processing time
- Closing: *The Boomerang Challenge*. Participants commit to take action based on the day's retreat topic

General logistics: participants and length

Generally, the Kindness Retreat runs 5 hours in length and is ideal for up to 150 participants. For the highest quality retreat, the length of the retreat may be determined by the group size. If your group is about 150 students, you may want to schedule 5 hours 15 minutes for your retreat experience. Please call our Retreat Coordinator with questions.

Small group leader orientation

Your small group leaders must arrive 45 minutes before the retreat begins. If this is not possible, we will take the first 10 to 15 minutes of the retreat to meet with the leaders (and the student participants will have to wait outside of the retreat room). Connecting with the small group leaders at the start of the day is crucial to the success of the retreat.

Opening and games

As soon as the students arrive, we engage them in interactive games. We have found that these activities help to break the ice and build a sense of community among the students. We consider this time "earning the right to be heard" on the part of our staff. We know that in order for students to get the most out of the day, they need to first get a feel for who we are and what the day has in store for them.

Topic-based talks

YF Retreat Staff will give 2 topic-based talks during the retreat. The first talk focuses on how bullying hurts,

creating a sense of empathy among the students, and how kindness can make a difference. We introduce the metaphor of the kindness boomerang—knowing that if you want to catch the kindness boomerang, you first have to throw it out there, and it will come back to you. The second talk focuses on being a hero for classmates by using tools like "ICI" (Interrupt, Compliment, Invite Away) to stand up for and help others. The goal of both talks is to help kids ask themselves important questions like, "What effects do my unkind actions have on my school, my classroom, my friends, and myself?"

Small groups

Three times during the day, the students will meet in pre-assigned small groups for discussion. Each discussion is facilitated by a small group leader and allows students to talk more in-depth about different types of bullying, how to positively deal with bullying, and ways they can make their school an even kinder place. It also gives students an opportunity to get to know others in their class better.

Closing

For many students, the highlight of the day is the closing activity. We ask students to commit to being a kinder person and facilitate this activity by asking each student to fill out a Boomerang Card. These cards challenge students to name specific ways they will show more kindness to their teachers and classmates. Students are then given the opportunity to share their commitments to kindness with their classmates.

Booking a Facility

Youth Frontiers Retreats

Though we strongly recommend you select an off-campus location, doing so is optional for Kindness Retreats. Retreats at a neutral location are more effective and free from distractions.

Location selection

When choosing an off-site location, schools typically reserve space at a nearby community center, church, synagogue, banquet center, hotel conference room, or similar type of facility.

The room size and flooring of the room are important factors when choosing a retreat location. The minimum size for a group of 100 students is 1600 square feet (allow 16 square feet per participant). Throughout the day, the room will be used for a variety of high-energy, large group games as well as small group interaction that requires adequate space for students to spread out. The room must be totally empty and free of chairs, pillars, bookshelves, etc.

Students will spend significant amounts of time sitting on the floor. If possible, book a location with a carpeted floor.

Location preparation

Please notify the staff at the facility that the sound at the retreat will be very loud. Since music is an important element of our retreats, we use a sound system to play live and recorded music throughout the day.

Please arrange to have the facility opened at least one hour before the students arrive to allow the Youth Frontiers staff to set up.

We need one eight-foot table and three chairs in the room, along with garbage cans for trash.

Teachers and staff may sit on chairs in the back of the room. If you have any students in a wheelchair, you will need to provide chairs for his or her small group (an additional 5-8 chairs).

Transportation

When holding your retreat off-site, please arrange transportation to and from the facility and notify Youth Frontiers of the exact arrival and departure times. We also need to know if students are arriving in shifts, as the retreat will not begin until all participants are present.

Please remember that transportation costs are paid by the school and are not included in the Youth Frontiers retreat fee.

Food

Youth Frontiers Retreats

All Youth Frontiers Retreats have a built-in time for both a snack and lunch. You (the coordinator) will need to confirm the lunch time with the Youth Frontiers Retreat Director the morning of the retreat.

Snack

You have the option of providing a snack for your students, such as a cookie or granola bar. We do not recommend providing plastic water bottles for a snack. If provided, snacks are distributed mid-morning, during the first small group.

Lunch

As a general rule, lunch will take place about 2.5 to 3 hours into the day, but we ask that lunch time remain flexible.

Although pizza or sub sandwiches work for lunch, problems often arise due to meals not arriving on time or not being ready for the scheduled lunch break; therefore, we recommend asking your students to bring a bag lunch. A bag lunch allows the most flexibility in breaking for lunch.

If you are not providing lunch for the small group leaders, remember to tell them to bring a lunch as well. Students and leaders will not be allowed to leave the retreat site for lunch, even if you have an open lunch policy at your school. If you do ask the students and leaders to bring their own lunches, you may want to bring a loaf of bread and peanut butter for those students who will inevitably forget their lunch.

If your retreat requires an overnight stay for the Youth Frontiers staff, please remember to include them in your provided lunch. Thank you!

Small Group Leaders

Youth Frontiers Retreats

Leaders have a huge impact on the quality of your retreat. Leading small groups, establishing the energy and tone of many activities, and being present throughout the retreat, leaders have a major influence on the behavior of the students and the success of the day. Strong leaders can keep a difficult group in control and focused on the messages of the retreat. As we tell the leaders, whatever the leaders do—good or bad—the students are likely to follow.

There should be a balance of male and female leaders and the diversity of the leaders should be similar to that of the students.

An ideal small group leader would be a good leader, positive role model, and a strong communicator.

A certificate of recognition for small group leaders can be found on our website by clicking on the “Clients” bubble, then “After Your Retreat” under the “Kindness” tab. This is a great way to commend the small group leaders for giving their time and is appreciated as a way to document their service hours.

Student leaders

Contact your local high school to secure leaders for your retreat. Often, schools use students who participate in a high school leadership program (Student Council, NHS, peer leaders, etc.).

Student leaders must be in 9th grade or above and at least 2-3 years older than the students on the retreat. There should be one student leader for every 5-8 students.

You may want to solicit emergency contact information for the high school leaders, in the event it is needed.

Adult leaders

You may also contact your local PTA/PTO parent group or other community volunteers to serve as leaders on the retreat. Please let adult leaders know the retreat is a very high-energy experience which requires some sitting on the floor. The retreat is most effective when all leaders participate fully in the retreat experience.

Leader orientation

It is important to communicate to leaders what is expected from them. Leaders will:

1. **Arrive 45 minutes** before the retreat begins and stay for the entire retreat. It is disruptive when leaders leave early.

2. **Lead small groups.** This is their biggest responsibility of the day. They will need to be able to communicate well, keep conversations going, and help students listen and share respectfully.

3. **Help control the crowd.** During the large group activities and talks, leaders need to spread out and sit with the students, not with each other.

4. **Bring their own bag lunch,** unless your school is able to provide lunch for them.

5. **Participate, have fun,** and encourage the students to participate and have fun. Comfortable clothing is recommended.

Leader t-shirts

To help leaders stand out at the retreat and have a unified presence, it is helpful if they wear the same color shirt. Youth Frontiers also has t-shirts available for purchase if your leaders, teachers, or even students would like to wear them.

If you would like to purchase t-shirts, you can indicate on your YF Priority One form how many shirts you would like to purchase. The cost for shirts is not included in the retreat, and your school will be charged separately, \$10 per shirt. If you purchase t-shirts, we will bring a variety of sizes to distribute the morning of the retreat.



Small Groups

Youth Frontiers Retreats

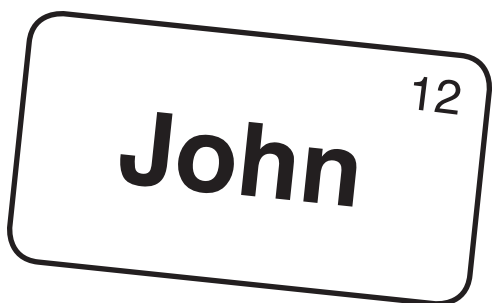
One of the most important elements of our retreats are the small group discussions on the retreat topics.

Three times during the day students will meet in these pre-assigned small groups. Each discussion is facilitated by a small group leader and centers around questions provided by Youth Frontiers to process the messages and challenges of the retreat and to get to know others in their class better.

Before your retreat day, you will need to assign students into groups of 5-8 students. We recommend 6 students per group, and small groups must not be larger than 8 students. It is important that students are not in small groups with their friends, since one of the goals of the retreat is to build community and allow students to get to know others outside of their normal group of friends. Be sure that the small groups have a reasonable gender balance.

Assign a number to each group (1 to 15, for example), and make a nametag for each student using their first name and group number. **DO NOT USE** letters or symbols to separate the groups. Be sure nametags are at least 48 point type so our staff can read them from far away. (See below.)

Students need to be wearing their nametags before the retreat begins. Please distribute nametags to the students prior to your arrival at the retreat location. When students are wearing nametags as they walk in the door, the Youth Frontiers staff and small group leaders can begin connecting with your students by name immediately.



Teacher and Staff Participation

Youth Frontiers Retreats

Expectations of teachers and staff

We understand how busy educators are and the desire for staff to complete work outside the retreat. However, we encourage teachers/staff to be present the entire retreat to observe and experience for themselves the power of these programs. The retreat offers unique perspective and insight for both teachers and students about the school's climate and community, and gives teachers touch points of language to continue the impact of the retreat in the classroom.

We expect teachers to:

1. Attend the teacher meeting with the YF Retreat Director during the first small group discussion time for the students.
2. Sit in the room with the students during the large group activities and topic-based talks.
3. Participate in the activities as they feel comfortable.
4. Assist with any disciplinary problems when requested by our staff.
5. Help distribute snack, lunch, or materials as needed.

Benefits of teacher and staff participation

1. Teachers and staff will better understand the messages of the retreat and can reinforce those lessons in the classroom. This can help lengthen the impact of the retreat.
2. The experience builds community by allowing teachers and staff to interact with students outside of the classroom. Teachers have told us that the retreat gave them a chance to see students in a different light, and many students say the same about their teachers.
3. The values being taught are timeless, and adults can benefit from thinking about them as well.

End-of-Day Sharing and Disclosure Information

Youth Frontiers Retreats

A Youth Frontiers retreat provides many opportunities for dialogue in both large and small group discussion.

During both small group conversations and large group sharing, students will be asked to refer to their own experience at school. Before the retreat, small group leaders will be instructed to be mindful of maintaining appropriate boundaries for the students in their small group conversations and to redirect the conversation if a student is sharing personal information inappropriate for a peer setting.

In our large group sharing at the end of the retreat, our staff will also create expectations for your students regarding what is appropriate to share during that time. The students will be asked to focus on what they want to do personally to improve themselves and the community of their school, and to be sensitive to blaming or embarrassing classmates.

If, during any part of the retreat, a YF staff member is made aware of a student referring to wanting to hurt themselves or someone else, the Youth Frontiers Retreat Director on your retreat will document the incident and relay it to one of your staff, ideally a counselor or school psychologist, if present. Small group leaders will also be asked to be aware of similar comments and to relay that information to one of the Youth Frontiers Staff.

Counselor/ Mental Health Professional Recommendation

Youth Frontiers Retreats

At the end of our Kindness Retreat there will be time for students to share a commitment from their Boomerang Card. Our staff will set expectations for the students that this should be a time for them to share a commitment to make their class and their school better. Occasionally, students may bring up emotional or personal experiences. Our staff will redirect students, when necessary, to stay within appropriate boundaries. Because we are encouraging students to reflect on their own personal experience, it can sometimes elicit a strong emotional response in students. We recommend that you have a counselor or mental health professional present at the retreat in the event that a student requires further support following the retreat experience.

Sample Memo to Staff

Youth Frontiers Retreats

Dear Staff,

We are excited about the upcoming Kindness Retreat to be presented by Youth Frontiers, Inc. Youth Frontiers is a nonprofit organization that has been delivering programs to schools for over 20 years that build positive school communities and help young people realize the importance of respecting themselves and others. Their vision is to change the way young people treat each other in every hallway, lunch line, and classroom of every school in America so that today's young people can make tomorrow's world better. Last year, Youth Frontiers worked with nearly 100,000 students and educators throughout the country.

On the day of our retreat, you are asked to fully participate in the retreat experience. Youth Frontiers staff members recognize how busy educators are and that you may want to complete work outside of the retreat room. We encourage teachers/staff to be present the entire retreat to observe and experience for yourself the power of these programs.

Your participation is important, both to understand and be able to reinforce the messages of the day, and to help build on the momentum created from this experience. The shared efforts of both teachers and Youth Frontiers will help build a greater sense of community in our school.

Youth Frontiers expects teachers and staff to:

- Attend the teacher meeting with the YF Retreat Director (mid-morning)
- Sit with the students during the large group activities, topic-based talks, and closing activity
- Assist with disciplinary problems if requested by the YF Retreat Staff
- Help distribute snack, lunch, or materials as needed

The Kindness Retreat is scheduled for _____ for the _____ grade class, and will be located at _____.

Thanks in advance for your support and participation at this important event.

Sincerely,

Sample Memo to Parents

Youth Frontiers Retreats

We are excited about the upcoming Kindness Retreat to be presented by Youth Frontiers, Inc. at _____ School.

Youth Frontiers is a nonprofit organization that has been delivering programs to schools for over 20 years that build positive school communities and help young people realize the importance of respecting themselves and others. Their vision is to change the way young people treat each other in every hallway, lunch line, and classroom of every school in America so that today's young people can make tomorrow's world better. Last year, Youth Frontiers worked with nearly 100,000 students and educators throughout the country.

On the Kindness Retreat, the Youth Frontiers Staff will focus on creating a more positive school community by engaging students in activities that demonstrate the painful effects of bullying and emphasize the value of kindness.

This high-energy, interactive retreat is scheduled for _____ for the _____ grade class and will be held at _____. We encourage parents and caregivers to inquire about the retreat experience once the student returns home.

For more information on the organization presenting the retreat, you can visit www.youthfrontiers.org.

Sincerely,