

Kindness Retreat® Prep Pack

Preparation Checklist

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 any questions, please call 952.922.0222. We're honored to be working with your school.

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Book a facility (Page 3)

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Find small-group leaders (Page 4)

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Read about nametags, food and student expectations (Page 5)

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Complete Priority One (P1) Form (Online)

Find your P1 Form at youthfrontiers.org/kindness-retreat-materials. Use the password: **charactermatters**. Please fill out this form at least **four weeks before** your retreat.

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Inform teachers, counselors and staff about your retreat (Pages 6, 7, 9, 10)

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Inform parents about your retreat (Page 8)

Spanish, Hmong and Somali versions of our enclosed parent letter are also available on Youth Frontiers' website.



Kindness Retreat® Overview

The Youth Frontiers Kindness Retreat includes a dynamic mix of activities, designed to have the greatest impact on participants. Generally, the Kindness Retreat runs **five hours** in length. The retreat focuses on how kindness makes a positive difference in your school and how unkind, bullying behaviors hurt others. We introduce the idea of being a hero for classmates by using tools like “ICI” (Interrupt, Compliment, Invite Away) and the Kindness Boomerang.



WELCOME

We welcome students with music and high-energy activities that break down social barriers. Our goal is to encourage students to take positive risks and connect with one another.



GOALS

After building a sense of community, our staff shares the retreat's goals. We encourage students to take a closer look at how they're treating themselves and others at their school.



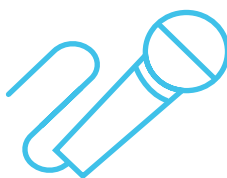
PRESENTATIONS

Retreat Staff share personal stories centered on the values of the retreat. With humor and heart, staff challenge students to make a difference in their lives and in their school.



SMALL GROUPS

Students meet in small groups, led by high school or adult leaders, to process what they are learning and experiencing throughout the day.



SHARING

Students get the chance to safely and publicly express how they will show more kindness to their teachers and classmates every day.



FOLLOW-UP

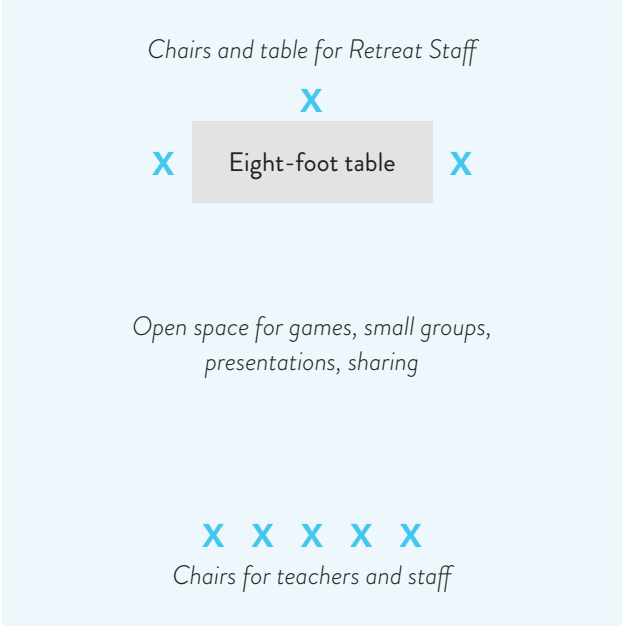
We equip schools with follow-up materials, language and measurement tools to reinforce the lessons students learned on the retreat.

Booking a Facility

Though we strongly recommend you select an off-campus location for your Kindness Retreat, doing so is optional. Retreats at a neutral location are more effective and free from distractions. Schools typically reserve a space at a nearby community center, religious center, banquet center, hotel conference room or similar type of facility.

Have the facility opened **at least one hour before students arrive** to allow the Youth Frontiers staff to set up. Please notify the facility staff that the retreat will be loud. Since music is an important element of our retreat, we use our own sound system to play live and recorded music throughout the day.

Ideal Room for Your Retreat

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 The minimum area for a group of 100 students is 1,600 square feet (allow 16 square feet per participant).2 A carpeted room is recommended since students will spend a significant amount of time sitting on the floor.3 We need one eight-foot table and three chairs for the Retreat Staff, along with multiple garbage and recycling cans.4 Chairs are also needed for teachers and staff to sit on. If you have a student in a wheelchair, chairs will need to be provided for their entire small group.
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Transportation

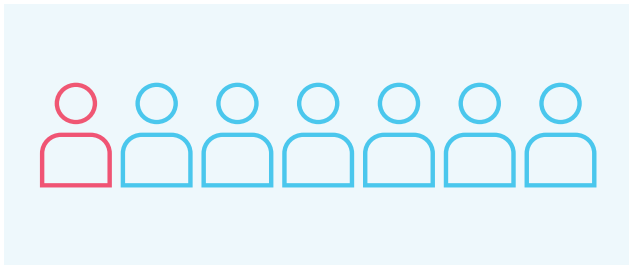
When holding your retreat off-site, please arrange transportation to and from the facility and notify Youth Frontiers of the exact arrival and departure times. We also need to know if students are arriving in shifts, as the retreat will not begin until all participants are present. Small-group leaders need to arrive 45 minutes before the retreat begins.

Transportation costs are paid by the school and are not included in the Youth Frontiers retreat fee.

Small-group Leaders

Small-group leaders establish the energy and tone of the retreat and have a major influence on its success. Students will meet in pre-assigned small groups for discussion three times during the retreat. Each discussion is facilitated by a small-group leader and allows students to talk about the messages of the day.

1:6 Ratio



Youth Frontiers recommends one leader for every six students. There should be no more than eight students per leader. Our Retreat Staff reserves the right, per our contract, to shorten or reschedule a retreat if there are not enough leaders/chaperones present. Student leaders must be in **10th grade or above**. There should be a gender balance and the diversity of the leaders should be similar to that of the students.

Expectations

Small-group leaders are expected to:

- **Arrive 45 minutes before the retreat** begins and stay for the entire retreat. It is disruptive when leaders leave early.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Bring their own bag lunch**, unless your school is able to provide lunch for them.
- **Participate, have fun and encourage** students to do the same. Comfortable clothing is recommended.

Recognition

To help leaders stand out at the retreat, it's helpful if they wear the same color shirt. If you would like to purchase t-shirts from Youth Frontiers, you can indicate on your Priority One Form how many t-shirts you would like. T-shirts cost \$12 each.



Visit youthfrontiers.org/kindness-retreat-materials for small-group leader recruitment tips and volunteer appreciation certificates. The password is: **charactermatters**.

Retreat Day Details

Student Expectations

In an effort to maintain our program quality and effectiveness, we ask that students do not use their phones on our retreats. These experiences are about building community and connection with the people in the room, and it's important that all participants are fully present. Refraining from using cell phones during the retreat also shows respect for all participants and facilitators.

We'd also like to remind you that the Kindness Retreat is interactive, so comfortable clothing is recommended. Because we are on the floor for parts of the day, skirts and dresses are not recommended.

Food

Youth Frontiers retreats have built-in time for both a mid-morning snack and lunch. On the morning of the retreat, the Youth Frontiers Lead Retreat Facilitator will confirm your lunch time with your main school contact. Typically, lunch occurs between two and a half and three hours after the start of the retreat.

Best Practices

- Provide a mid-morning snack. You have the option to bring snacks for students, like granola bars, during the first small-group conversation.
- Ask students and/or your cafeteria to provide **bag lunches**. This allows the most flexibility.
- **Keep lunch in the room.** 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. Using your school cafeteria is not recommended.

Nametags

Before your retreat day, you will need to assign students into small groups. The groups should be as gender balanced as possible and avoid having good friends or high-conflict relationships in the same group.

Assign a number to each group (one 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 represent the groups. Be sure nametags are at least 48-point type or handwritten in large, legible penmanship so our staff can read them from far away.

Students need to be wearing their nametags before the retreat begins. Distribute nametags to the students prior to your arrival at the retreat location. When students are wearing nametags, Retreat Staff and small-group leaders can immediately begin connecting with students by name.



For Your Staff

Staff Expectations

- **Attend the teacher meeting(s)** with the YF Lead Retreat Facilitator.
- **Sit in the room** with the students during the large-group activities and topic-based talks.
- **Participate** in activities as they feel comfortable.
- **Assist** with any disciplinary problems when requested by our staff.
- **Help distribute** snack, lunch and retreat materials as needed.

Participation Benefits

1

Teachers/staff will better understand the language of the retreat, enabling them to reinforce those lessons in the classroom.

2

The retreat experience builds community. Teachers have told us that the retreat gives them a chance to see students in a different light, and many students say the same about their teachers.

3

The values we teach are timeless and everyone can benefit from this experience.

Special Note for School Counselors

Sharing

During both small-group conversations and large-group sharing, students will be asked to refer to their own experiences 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 that is inappropriate for a peer setting.

During large-group sharing, our staff will create expectations for your students regarding what is appropriate to share. The students will be asked to focus on what they want to do personally to improve themselves and their community, and to refrain from blaming or dwelling on past conflicts with 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, our staff will document

the incident and relay it to one of your staff, ideally a counselor or school psychologist. Small-group leaders will also be asked to be aware of similar comments and to relay that information to one of our staff.

Mental Health Support

At the end of your 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. To ensure student safety, our staff will redirect students, when necessary, to stay within appropriate boundaries. We recommend that you have a counselor or mental health professional present at the retreat in the event that a student requires further support.

Sample Memo to Staff

Dear Staff,

I am excited about the upcoming Kindness Retreat® to be presented by Youth Frontiers, Inc. Youth Frontiers (YF) is a nonprofit organization that has been delivering retreats to schools since 1987. They provide schools with experiences that inspire character, civility and community so that our next generation of leaders is grounded in character. Last year, YF worked with nearly 124,000 students and educators throughout the country.

On the day of our retreat, you are asked to fully participate in the retreat experience. Youth Frontiers recognizes how busy educators are and that you may want to complete work outside of the retreat room, but I encourage you to be present to observe and experience for yourself the power of the retreat.

Your participation is important, both to understand and to be able to reinforce the messages of the day, and to help build on the momentum created from this experience.

Youth Frontiers asks teachers and staff to:

- **Attend the teacher meeting(s)** with the YF Lead Retreat Facilitator.
- **Sit in the room** with the students during the large-group activities and topic-based talks.
- **Participate** in activities as you feel comfortable.
- **Assist** with disciplinary problems if requested by the YF Retreat Staff.
- **Help distribute** snack, lunch and retreat materials as needed.

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

Visit youthfrontiers.org/kindness-retreat for more information on Youth Frontiers and to watch a video about the Kindness Retreat. If you'd like additional resources from Youth Frontiers, visit youthfrontiers.org/resources to join their Character Challenge email list, access their blog and sign up for newsletters.

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

Sincerely,

School Principal or Staff Member

Sample Letter for Parents/Caregivers

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Our school believes that to do well in school, students need to feel physically and emotionally safe. In our ongoing effort to create a safe and caring culture, we are having a Youth Frontiers Kindness Retreat®.

Youth Frontiers (YF) is a nonprofit organization that has been delivering retreats to schools since 1987. They provide schools with experiences that inspire character, civility and community so that our next generation of leaders is grounded in character. Last year, YF worked with nearly 124,000 students and educators throughout the country. On the Kindness Retreat, the YF Retreat Staff will focus on creating a more positive school community by engaging students in a variety of activities that build students' empathy skills and teach safe ways to help prevent unkind actions.

This high-energy, interactive retreat is scheduled on _____ for the _____ grade class and will be held at _____.

To reinforce the positive effects of the retreat, we believe it's important for the entire community to be involved in supporting and communicating the messages delivered on the retreat. Because of this, we encourage parents and caregivers to inquire about their retreat experience once their student returns home by asking the following questions:

1. What activities did you find fun?
2. What were the small-group leaders like?
3. What were some of the unkind actions going on at school that you discussed?
4. Have you been affected by the unkind actions?
5. Did you talk about how you as a class can work on that?
6. What was the most important thing you learned?
7. What is one thing you can do tomorrow at school to show kindness?

Visit youthfrontiers.org/kindness-retreat for more information on Youth Frontiers and to watch a video about the Kindness Retreat.

Sincerely,

School Principal or Staff Member

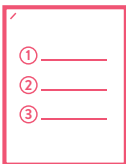





** This letter is also available in Spanish, Hmong and Somali versions on the YF website.*

Kindness Retreat®



Follow-up Materials

Youth Frontiers is not just a one-day program. In fact, we have several levels of follow-up tools for you to use as your time allows. Find all of our follow-up materials at youthfrontiers.org/kindness-retreat-materials. Use the password: **charactermatters**. If you have any questions or feedback, please let us know by emailing info@youthfrontiers.org.

One Week Post Retreat	Four Weeks Post Retreat	Eight Weeks Post Retreat
 Reflection Journals <p>We provide journal exercises that help students to reflect on the retreat soon after it happens. Students solidify their role in making their school a more positive place.</p>	 Student Evaluations <p>Our online evaluation measures shifts in cognition, attitude and perception of behavior as a result of the retreat experience. Your evaluation link will be emailed to you after your retreat.</p>	 Flashback Video <p>This short video features some of our Retreat Facilitators and reminds your students of the messages of kindness that they learned on their retreat.</p>
Ongoing		
 Conversation Starters <p>Dive deeper into the lessons of the Kindness Retreat with these thematically grouped conversation starters. These are ideal for morning meetings or advisory periods.</p>	 Character Challenges <p>This weekly email includes character-inspired images and videos. These are perfect for morning meetings or personal inspiration. Sign up at youthfrontiers.org/resources.</p>	 Posters/Awards/Stickers <p>Put up a visual reminder of the Kindness Retreat with our Kindness poster. Give out boomerang stickers or kindness awards when you witness kind acts from your students.</p>

Kindness Retreat[®]

The Kindness Retreat is filled with activities that most students find refreshing and energizing. For some students, we know that these activities may cause stress and anxiety. We want every student to be a part of the retreat, but we understand if accommodations must be made for some students. Please use this information to talk with your students ahead of time about what they should expect and to decide if accommodations should be made. A YF staff member will be available on the day of your retreat to answer any questions you have.

MINUTES	ACTIVITY
10	WELCOME & GAMES
20	SHIPS AHOY
10	RAINSTORM
10	GOAL OF THE DAY
15	SOUL TRAIN
25	SMALL GROUP 1
15	SONG SET 1
15	TALK 1
15	SMALL GROUP 2
15	BOOMERANG PLEDGE
35	LUNCH/DANCE
10	SONG SET 2
15	TALK 2
15	SMALL GROUP 3
5	HERO SHOWCASE
10	DANCE BREAK
15	CLASS MEETING
5	BOOMERANG CARDS
20	SHARING
5	CLOSING REMARKS
5	CLASS CONNECTION

GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Students may be asked to find partners, shake hands and give high-fives or have close physical contact with one another. Students are encouraged to participate as they feel comfortable. Welcome activities can be loud.

CONTENT

Throughout the day, we take breaks from the high-energy activities to talk about kindness. We encourage students to be active listeners during these times, and ask that staff remain in the room.

MUSIC & DANCE

During our song sets, students are encouraged to sing and participate with motions. Contact with peers may be part of the singing time. Additionally, these times can be loud. We can provide ear plugs for students with sound sensitivity.

SHARING

The retreat day culminates with sharing, giving students the chance to be heard by their class. Students are expected to be quiet during this time and show respect for their peers.

