

Gratitude Embers

www.campaugusta.org

Theme: Gratitude and the dual value behind thank-you cards

Age of campers: 8+

Time allotted/actual: 45 minutes +

Location: Anywhere with a table to work on

Props/Materials/Symbols: Blank thank you cards, pens, donation sheet.

Prep done: Gather the materials and lay them out for everyone.

Opening/Mood set: Start off with a discussion of what you are grateful for and why. This can include anything, general or specific, not limited to camp. Invite the campers to join in this and talk about things that they are grateful for.

Transition the discussion to the camp specific and show the donation sheet. Pass around the sheet and ask the campers to write their names next to specific things they are grateful for or that they have a connection to (i.e. often use and love). Once everyone has chosen a few of the items on the list, present the concept of donations over the years and how influential they have been in shaping some of those domains at camp.

Questions/Activities:

Ask everyone how gratitude could be shown for these donations. Commonly, the group will suggest letter writing as an avenue. If not, selling the idea and see how it lands.

Coach the campers through their letters with the following model:

1. Thank you for _____
2. I really enjoy _____ because of _____
3. _____ is great for camp because of _____
4. _____ has helped me grow in _____ way.
5. *Optional:* Draw a nice picture

Closing: Discuss any remaining thoughts at the end.

Were other people involved? None needed

Thoughts on pacing? Be prepared to work with some potential apathy or disinterest. It is a part of the process and is natural for campers in almost any age bracket in our culture. If campers are not writing from a place of real interest, then look at that, but don't force them to write about being grateful if they are not.

What would you change next time / what did you learn / how would you enhance it? Bringing in a personal story about gratitude or famous quotes would be nice, or even bringing in thoughts from the study of gratitude as a proven psychological happiness influencer and a buffer against chronic ailments. See below for links.

Camper feedback: "We kinda have to do this all the time, but this time there were better reasons for it."

Notes:

For more info on the science of gratitude, see the following links:

-<http://www.spring.org.uk/2007/09/practicing-gratitude-can-increase.php>

PsyBlog on gratitude influencing happiness.

-<http://www.cfidsselfhelp.org/library/counting-your-blessings-how-gratitude-improves-your-health>

Article on happiness as an illness ward

-The work of Dr Robert Emmons, UCD happiness researcher

Book: *Words of Gratitude*

Quotes

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

-Melodie Beattie

“What if you gave someone a gift, and they neglected to thank you for it - would you be likely to give them another? Life is the same way. In order to attract more of the blessings that life has to offer, you must truly appreciate what you already have.”

-Ralph Marston

“Many times a day I realize how much my own life is built on the labors of my fellowmen, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.”

-Albert Einstein

Want more?

<http://www.sendwisecards.com/Quotes-about-Gratitude.php>