

CIRCLE ACTIVITIES

The YMCA Adventure Guides program has been designed around the primary Compass Points of family, nature, community, and fun. For each Compass Point, unlimited possibilities are available for parents and children to explore ideas and take part in fun activities. In the next several sections, we provide you with sample ideas and activities to use in Circle and Expedition gatherings. You'll find rituals and ceremonies, stories, crafts, songs, games, adventures, and service projects that have been used with success and enjoyment in programs across the country. Additional sections cover outdoor camping, awards, and Family Circle activities to try at home.

YMCA of the USA maintains a website at www.ymca.net that includes additional activities. If you're feeling stumped, log on for new ideas.

Your YMCA Outfitter (program director) has access to the latest activities that appeal to children. Many of the staff have expertise in camping, school-age child care, youth sports, and group work. They will be happy to share ideas with you.

CHART

Help them find activities that make constructive use of their time. All kids need access to quality programs and activities that enrich their lives, develop their talents and interest, and help them develop healthy relationships.

These can include:

- Music
- Drama and other arts
- Sports and hobbies
- Involvement in church, synagogue, temple, or other religious community. It's also important that they spend time at home.

Hundreds of books on the market are filled with songs, stories, and crafts for children. Many websites are also devoted to keeping youths' activities fresh and interesting. Listings of suggested websites appear at end of several chapters in this part. There's such an abundance

of resources available in this area that your Circle might even decide to appoint a new position called "researcher" to gather ideas for Circle meetings.

Part of the magic in the program, and the advantage of being a part of the YMCA movement, is the sharing of activities. Over time, your Circle and Expeditions will develop a collection of fun, interesting, and exciting activities. You might consider pooling these ideas and posting them on a program website or submitting them to your local YMCA or to YMCA of the USA for future publications. This is just one of many ways to keep this program alive for years to come.

COMPASS POINT

As you begin planning activities, use the program's Compass Points to guide you.

Strengthen Family

Just being together, focused on one another, and communicating in new ways is sure to strengthen the relationship between a parent and a child. Family projects (i.e. making a program vest), family adventure (i.e., YMCA Adventure Guide night at the pool), and family components in the awards program (i.e. making a meal for family members) are all good ways to build strong families. Explore your own family culture, race, and ethnicity (i.e. creating a family tree and giving a report to your Circle).

Experience All That Nature Has to Offer

Be better stewards of the environment, practice conservation strategies, and always recycle. Be better informed about the plants and animals you share this planet with. Ask the YMCA camp staff to do a presentation of this topic. Select Circle adventures that give everyone opportunities to find out about wildlife, plants, and the ecology. Experience the outdoors through hiking, skiing, rock climbing, and regular campouts. Educate others on the environmental considerations of the camping experience by following the Leave No Trace principles.

Participate in Community

Begin by building your Circle community. Then develop community within the Circle. Learn the names and nicknames of your Circle's members, as well as something about their character and interests. Elect officers and fulfill all Circle responsibilities to help build community.

Next, branch out and explore your large community. Discover what your community has to offer- this will help you plan Circle adventures and decide on Circle or Expedition service projects. Participate in community fairs and parades. Participate in fact finding information about the community. Do an Internet search, attend a museum, or speak to leaders in the community. Explore the culture, race, and ethnicity of your fellow Circle members and others in your community. You can capitalize on the YMCA as an international organization by exploring your global community. The International Department at the YMCA of the USA has materials to help you achieve this goal.

Have Fun

The games, songs, stories, campfires, ceremonies, and so on all contribute to a sense of magic and of fun, but what's most important is that you learn to have fun with your son or daughter.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT VALUES

Activities focusing on character development can round out the program. Promote a sense of honor and respect for the program's origin (memorize aims, mottos, and the program purpose); a commitment to displaying good character (caring, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, citizenship, fairness); the motivation to learn new skills; setting and achieving personal goals; and taking on leadership opportunities.

Young people can also develop character through service to others. This service component has been part of the YMCA programs for years. Some Circles have made donations to YMCA World Service, while others have raised money to support Native American causes, including donations to the Sioux Indian YMCA in South Dakota. The awards system is set up to encourage and recognize service within the family and the community. For example, consider completing chores, participating in a for a charitable cause, or gathering canned goods for a food drive.