

## How to Plan an Intergenerational Event

Many meetings have trouble planning inclusive events. First and foremost, it is important that the event itself be well thought through. Ask who do you want to attract? Is the event intended to be “family friendly” (including young children and babies)? Is it intended to attract middle school Friends? High school Friends? Young Adult Friends? Older Friends? Will there be childcare?

- If you want middle schoolers, high schoolers, young adults and parents to attend, include them in the planning. This makes it more likely that a broad range of meeting members will feel welcomed and be likely to attend.
- When older adults will also be included, there may be particular concerns for the challenges of accessibility and hearing.
- Consider timing. An event held at the end of the semester or early in the morning may be less welcoming to middle school, high school, college students and young adults than one held later in the day and during school breaks.
- Does the event take into account the needs, interests, finances and attention spans of the various folks to be included?

## Intergenerational Activities for Meetings

What events can the meeting hold that may be attractive to high school, young adult and older adult Friends? How can we build a community that supports all ages of adults and teenagers interacting in meaningful and fun ways? Here are some ideas:

### Activities:

- Game night
  - Group murals
  - Care quilts
  - Knitting group
  - Contra-dancing
  - Annual wreath-making
  - Singing before or after meeting or on weekend evenings
  - Making cookies or care packages for college students
  - Hikes
  - Sports
  - Stone soup
  - Trip to historic Quaker sites
  - Cooking
  - Craft fair
- ### Community Service:
- Create care packages for prisoners
  - Intergenerational pairs or teams to visit other meetings
  - Meetinghouse workdays
  - Soup kitchens
  - Prairie or local greenspace restorations
  - Neighborhood clean-ups

## How to Engage in Intergenerational Conversations

Intergenerational conversations often get problematic when one person assumes that because of his or her age and the other person’s age they cannot find common ground. Or, when one person assumes that because of his or her age he or she is only in a position to give or to receive in the conversation; he or she doesn’t expect the conversation to be reciprocal. Conversations in which we engage in listening and being listened to are the interactions that are most satisfying and memorable.

### What are you passionate about?

Share that. Show your passion. Be open and honest in both your talking and in your listening.

### What are you curious about?

Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Be curious, and also be authentic.

### Share your interests.

Talk about things you are interested in and share your thoughts.

### Go out on a limb.

Both youth and adults share great diversity in social skills. Just be yourself. Go out on a limb and start a conversation with someone you don’t know. Enjoy your experience together. How will you follow up next time?



### **Just be together.**

If you don't know what to say, just relax. Share from your heart. Don't worry about your age or how you look. Just engage in a loving way. See what happens.



- Serving as Friendly Adult Presences for Middle or High School retreats
- Local work camps

#### **Political Action:**

- Marches/protests
- Sponsoring Eyes Wide Open exhibit
- Letter writing

#### **Formats:**

- Potlucks
- Pizza night
- Mentoring program
- Weekend camping trip
- Intergenerational fish-bowl
- Lunch after meeting
- Picnic
- Retreat
- Cross-generational interviewing
- Family friendly meeting for worship (wiggle worship)
- Spiritual friendships
- Friendly eights/potluck groups
- Progressive dinner including stops at younger Friends' colleges
- Films/discussion groups
- Book group

#### **Topics:**

- Quaker parenting
- Storytelling
- Spirituality and sexuality
- Spiritual journeys
- Vocational journeys



- For some meetings, having traditional times when particular events can be expected (like a monthly game night), allows Friends of all ages to anticipate and to plan to participate.
- It is helpful if the event can allow for a variety of levels of participation within a single event. Activities such as bowling and swim parties, camp-outs, overnights at the meeting house, singing, picnics and hikes are frequently enjoyable for at least middle school through middle age.
- Service events or other action-oriented projects often provide an opportunity for Friends of all ages to find commonalities without feeling forced.
- Consider how you advertise the event. Reach out on the communication channels used by those you would like to attract. This may include email, listserves or Facebook. Personal invitations are helpful, especially if you are reaching out to people beyond the usual attendees.
- Offer rides to those who might not have transportation
- Ask for feedback. What worked? What were the barriers?
- For ideas on specific activities, check out the "Intergenerational Activities for Meetings" card.