

PROGRAMMING

If you want to encourage teens to explore religion and spirituality you need to take an active role and provide programming that will engage adolescents. Here's a brief list of programming ideas and resources to get you started. For more help, L. Carman's *Reaching Out to Religious Youth A Guide to Services, Programs, and Collections* (Greenwood, 2004) is an excellent resource.

Program Ideas

- Interfaith Fair
- Tarot card readings
- Multi-faith fiction book club (see the Fiction Highlights pages for examples to use in your own program)
- Films and Faith (check out the Explorefaith website for an excellent list of popular Hollywood films that can spark discussions of issues of faith and spirituality: <http://explorefaith.org/resources/film/index.php>)
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Wiccans and Witchcraft: What is it really all about?
- Native spirituality and environmentalism

Sample Program: Meditation and Yoga for Teens

Program Length: 2 sessions (35-45 min each)

Equipment Required:

- Yoga/Pilates mats
- Mat cleaner: one part white vinegar to three parts water

Community Partnerships

- A local yoga instructor (lead the 2nd session)
- Local YMCA /yoga studio (borrow equipment)

Pre-Planning

- Research meditation/yoga and their place in religion/spirituality (i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.). The resource list on the next page can help you get started.
- Contact community groups/individuals to borrow necessary equipment and provide yoga services.
- Promote the program online and in-print
- Create a registration form
- Develop an evaluation method

This program is an introduction to meditation, guided imagery, and yoga for teens. Yoga and meditation are becoming increasingly popular in North America. These techniques can reduce stress and improve physical and mental health. Many libraries across North America are offering similar programs for patrons of all ages. Teens are not immune from information overload and pressure in their daily lives. This program educates teens about the connection between meditation and religious/spiritual practices, as well as providing them with techniques to reduce stress and improve their sense of self.

Delivered in two sessions, it ensures that teens have a broad overview of the different types of meditation and its benefits. To ensure that there are enough mats and space in the library, participants must register for each session. Due to limited space, this program is limited to 15 participants. The first session will provide a background into meditative practices and introductory exercises. A local yoga instructor will run the second session and guide teens through a number of poses. Teens will need to wear comfortable clothes to each session, but fitness apparel is not necessary.

Session One: This session will be lead by the YA librarian

- Discuss participants' previous experience or knowledge of meditation or yoga.
- Loosen up the body and break the ice with an exercise from *Magical Meditations* (Galenorn, 2003)
- Introduction to meditation and its religious ties and influences (i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity)
- Discuss the potential benefits of meditation
- Complete the breathing exercise from *Magical Meditations* (Galenorn, 2003)
- Complete a guided imagery exercise designed to focus and relax the mind (<http://www.interluderetreat.com/meditate/relax.htm>).
- Highlight the display of library materials that compliment the program session.

Session Two: This Session will be lead by the YA librarian and yoga instructor

- Introduce the benefits and different types of yoga
- The yoga instructor will lead the group through poses designed for stress reduction and relaxation. Poses should be at a beginner level so that all teens can participate, regardless of their fitness level. The instructor may also choose to add in breathing or guided imagery exercises.
- Highlight the display of library materials that compliment the program session.

Need More Information on Meditation, Yoga or Guided Imagery?

Reach out to local community groups that incorporate meditation or yoga into their faith. Local groups can provide a wealth of information on these topics and they may be willing to lead a session.

Contact other public libraries that have run similar programs.

- North Miami Public Library has run an all ages program, *Relax with Yoga and Meditation*.
<http://www.northmiamifl.gov/community/library/>
- The Skokie Public Library and Malden Public Library have both held teen yoga programs.
<http://www.skokie.lib.il.us/>
<http://maldenpubliclibrary.org/>

BBC Religion & Ethics: Buddhism, Meditation

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/customs/meditation_1.shtml)

BBC Religion & Ethics: Hinduism, Reflections on Meditation

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/ritesrituals/meditation_1.shtml)

Beauchemin, J., Hutchins, T. & Patterson, F. (2008). Mindfulness meditation may lessen anxiety, promote social skills, and improve academic performance among adolescents with learning disabilities. *Complementary Health Practice Review*, 13 (34): 34-45.

Project meditation: Benefit meditation (http://www.project-meditation.org/a_bom2/benefit_meditation.html)

Galenorn, Y. (2003). *Magical meditations: Guided imagery for the pagan path*. Toronto: Crossing Press.

Interlude: An Internet Retreat. (<http://www.interluderetreat.com/>)

Sample Program: Music in the Library—Music is Cultural

The objective of this program is to expose teens to music influenced by a variety of religions and cultures. Its purpose is to improve community awareness, increase tolerance, and create an appreciation for culturally-influenced music.

This program should address the fact that even secular music is influenced by cultural traditions, including religion. Several popular North American music genres have religious roots, and many types of popular music include references to religion or mythology. Country music's greatest influence is found in the religious life of the Southern United States. Music that forms the genre of American Roots is deeply entrenched with religious references: e.g., American classics such as "Amazing Grace," "We Shall Overcome," and Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky." Popular religion helps to create popular music, as illustrated by Dorival Caymmi and Tito Puente: in both cases the connection to Yoruban religion widened their frame of reference among their own people.

Program Plan:

- Ask the participants to think about how music can tell stories and reveal distinctive aspects of their cultural identity. Think about this in relation to other cultures.
- Contact local musicians who may be interested in performing at the library; you may wish to relate these performances to associated religious holidays, cultural holidays, or with World Religion Day (third Sunday of January).
- If there is a teen advisory group, ask your local teens if there are any local choirs or local musicians who might be interested in performing in the library.

Some Suggested Musical Performances:

- Country music
- Gospel singers for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Tibetan Buddhist chanting, which features a single, strong harmonic sung over a low pitch, similar to a style of Tuvan throat-singing
- Rai: a mixture of Spanish, Arabic, French and African music
- Local choirs
- For Black History Month invite drummers to perform African music
- Sheik style of singing Shabads popularly known as Gurbani Sangeet or 'Shabad Keertan'
- Ballad singers who sing stories and heroic deeds from Sikh history, accompanied by musicians playing dhads and sarangis
- Rastafarian music by Bob Marley and Peter Tosh
- Native American musicians in your community

Halifax Regional Municipality celebrated its sixth annual World Religion Day with several concerts featuring harp, acoustic bass and djembe drum. Performers included the Baha'i Army of Light Dance Troupe, who combined dance and rhythm with readings from the Words of Baha'u'llah, and the Kitpu Mi'kmaq Youth Drummers and Dancers. There were several choirs from the Shambhala Centre, the Universalist Unitarian Church, Beechville Baptist choir and gospel music. Also included were readings from Hindu scriptures, and a drama performed by Brahma Kumaris members depicted the soul returning to its true nature.

Suggested Resources

- Beck, G. (2006). *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press.
- Fletcher, P. (2004). *World Musics in Context: A Comprehensive Survey of the World's Major Musical Cultures*. Oxford.
- Sharma, A. (1994). *Our Religions: The Seven World Religions Introduced by Preeminent Scholars from Each Tradition*. New York: HarperOne.
- Krueger, D. (2009). *Interfaith Calender with Glossary of Religious Terms*.
(<http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm>)

Buddhist Vegetarian Stew (Lo Han Jai)

6 servings

“We give thanks to the many beings who helped bring us this food.”

—Zen Mealtime Prayer

- 1 ounce (about 8) dried black shiitake mushroom
- 1/2 cup cloud ear fungus (dried mushrooms)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup canned bamboo shoots, sliced and drained
- 8 oz. can sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 1 carrot, julienned
- 3 cups shredded Napa cabbage
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 2 ounces bean threads, cellophane noodles or mung vermicelli
- 1 cup firm tofu, cut in 1/2-inch cubes
- 16 snow peas, strings removed, julienned
- 2 cups fresh bean sprouts
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch, mixed well with 4-5 tbs cold water
- 1 teaspoon Oriental sesame oil
- 2-3 cups hot water

Soak shiitake in hot water for 30 minutes. Soak cloud ear fungus in hot water for 10 minutes. Drain and reserve water from both mushrooms. Remove and discard shiitake stems, and leave most whole (cut large ones into halves or quarters). Cut cloud ear fungus into small pieces.

Heat the oil in a wok and stir-fry the mushrooms, cloud ear fungus, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, carrot, and cabbage for 4 minutes. Add broth, reserved mushroom water, and bean threads. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add tofu, snow peas, bean sprouts, and soy sauce. Cover and simmer for 2 minutes. Stir in cornstarch mixture and continue to cook until sauce thickens. Drizzle with sesame oil and serve hot.