

Ideas For Affirmations

Affirmations are physical or verbal statements of one's gifts, where people share with an individual where they see God and goodness in him or her. They can be in a form of a prayer meeting or through written letters and messages. They are especially powerful in youth ministry as they have the power to uplift and empower others. Youth and teenagers constantly are looking for confidence and self-worth, and affirmations from those close to them can help these young people love their true selves. Affirmations tell youth that they are loved, they are worthy of being loved, and they are allowed to love in return.

When are Affirmations Appropriate?

Affirmations should be used sparingly in order to maximize the impact. If affirmations are done every day or even every week, they become commonplace and lose their power. People might even grow tired of them or run out of things to say.

With this in mind, you should always compliment and affirm your youth on a daily basis, just not through a formal affirmation meeting. Find every moment you can to encourage them, and admire the things that they have done. Just because affirmations should not be used on a regular basis does not mean that you cannot affirm others constantly.

Formal affirmations can be used after an especially vulnerable and intense retreat. They are best used for a close and intimate group of people at an end of the year event such as an appreciation dinner. It should be relatively small and should only include those willing to be affirmed and give affirmations.

Other Considerations for Affirmations

It is also very important that formal affirmations should be used between people who know each other intimately. There needs to be a sincerity with affirmations and if it is on the surface level, then affirmations can do more harm than good. If someone does not believe that you care for them but are doing affirmations just for the sake of doing them, then those insincere affirmations can actually hurt his or her self-esteem. It is like being friends with an outcast out of pity with no regard to his character. Does that person really want that kind of friendship? Do others really want those kinds of affirmation?

At the same time, be aware of those who do not receive as many affirmations as others. If they start comparing their self-worth to the number of affirmations they receive, then they might start questioning their own character and worthiness of being loved. There should be a group of people ahead of time who have reflected on everyone in the group and be ready to affirm anyone who feel left out.

Finally, there are some people who are either uncomfortable giving affirmations or even receiving affirmations. Be aware of these people and never force them to do anything they do not want. Allow them to share with those they are the most comfortable with and you can leave it at that.

Examples of Affirmations

There are usually two broad categories of affirmations, verbal and written. Written allows people to write whatever they are comfortable without the added pressure of the other person present. Verbal is usually a ceremony that can take up to about an hour or even longer. It allows for a more intimate and vulnerable sharing.

Ideas for Written Affirmation

Prayer scrolls

- Long sheets of paper, scroll like
- Write a person's name on each scroll
- Set up a station with markers and the scrolls
- For each scroll, tell the participants to write how they see God or a simple prayer for the person

*You can also change it to a prayer mat, a prayer book, or a prayer accordion depending on the shape of the paper.

Lunch Bag Prayer Affirmations

- Lunch bags with the participants names on it.
- Tape them to a wall or other accessible location
- Have small pieces of paper on a side station
- Allow participants to write affirmations on paper and put in lunch bag

Ideas for Verbal Affirmation

Affirmation Candles

- Have participants gather in a circle
 - In the center of the circle, have a number of candles, less than a third the number of participants
 - Have predetermined people take candles from the center
 - Those with candles go to someone around the circle to affirm him or her
 - Once affirmed, those with candles pass on the candle to the affirmed person and take his or her place in the circle
 - Now the new candle holder goes affirms another person in the circle and the process repeats
- *hugging is allowed but be careful of open flame

Affirmation Toast

- Similar to affirmation candles, have participants gather in a circle
 - Every one has a small cup
 - Instead of candles in the center, have water bottles instead
 - Same thing with candles, those with water bottles go affirm those without
 - After an affirmation, pour each other a drink, toast, and drink together
 - Switch off the water bottle and new water bottle holder goes affirms someone else
- *Extremely similar to Affirmation Candles with little risk of hair catching on fire when hugging

Small Group Affirmation

- Done in very small, intimate groups with members who know each other very well
- A person is chosen and each person in the group affirms the chosen
- After being affirmed, the person may chose a new member to affirm

Remember that affirmations strengthen bonds, not create them. If members and participants do not know each other very well, then there is a greater chance for surface-level affirmations. If that is the case, then try sticking to written affirmations.