

Creative Experiences

The creative experience immediately follows the story experience. Its purpose is to invite the children into a exploration of what the story and lesson meant to them personally. It is helpful to offer more than one creative experience choice per lesson.

A Creative Experience:

- Is open ended
- Allows the children individual expression
- Is directly connected to the lesson intention
- Takes into consideration the different learning styles of children
- Is age appropriate

Types of Creative Experiences

- Quiet and meditative
- Loud and active
- Art based
- Games/active
- Science based

Other Points

- Some creative experiences are blended into the storytelling portion of the lesson,
- Creative experiences can be set up in stations around the room so the children can choose the activity they most resonate with.

Active Learning

It is quite simply learning by doing. It is an adventure; it is fun and interactive; it involves everyone even the observers; it is student based with the students making their own discoveries; it is process-oriented and the experience is evaluated through discussion. It is also relational because the students must interact with one another.

The Benefits

- Learning becomes an adventure with surprises.
- Everyone gets involved in the action.
- Learning depends on students making discoveries.
- Process of learning is as important as end result.
- A discussion debriefing the experience helps students apply the learning.
- Learners interact with each other learning relational skills.

In order to help the students to get the most from their experience, you must help them interpret their experience. Active learning takes on power when we reflect on the experience.

During debriefing we ask:

- What just happened here?
- How can we learn from it?
- How will we be different because of it?

Examples

Art Activities

There are many ways to use art as a creative experience. Some ideas from Joanne Ramseyer, MA, ATR, LCPC

- After reading a story, invite the students to choose the part of the story that had the most meaning to them and create an art piece around it.
- As a group, invite each person to illustrate a piece of the story using torn tissue paper and thinned glue. When complete, put the pieces together and retell the story.
- Invite them to create new illustrations for an old story.
- Read a story almost to the end and invite the students to create art pieces that tell different possible endings.
- Create a booklet in response to any story.
- Create masks or puppets in order to retell the story.
- Illustrate different emotions.
- Create a new environment for the characters.
- Invite the students to create an image of one of the teachings in the story.

Food Activities

What better way to help students recall stories and Spiritual principles than to connect them with food. How many of you are immediately transported back to a wonderful memory upon just the smell of certain foods. Using food and creativity helps make the lessons and principles real it is something the students enjoy doing.

Science Experiments

The use of science experiments helps to ground abstract principles in concrete learning.

Games

Use games to engage them in fun and to also offer a learning experience about what happened during the game.

Object Lessons

“Object Lessons are Visual Analogies. “It is using familiar objects to explain unfamiliar ideas, usually abstract principles. Many hard-to-understand truths can be symbolized by easy-to-understand objects.”
The Joyful Child” & “Nurturing Spirituality in Children, by Peggy Jenkins

You can use Object Lessons at any time. The Living Curriculum is about drawing wisdom out of people rather than putting it into them. Allowing the children/teens to give their ideas about the spiritual nature of an object is empowering to them.

Here are some ideas using common objects created by Unity Youth Ministry Educators.

Random Items

- Gather a bag full of random items and invite the children/teens to draw an item out and use the following sentence for them to share what it is about.
- “This is a _____ but it is so much more! It _____. It is a _____ and so much more.
- Or, you can just have them draw the item out and ask them how it is like God.

Beads & String

- Diversity: The string is God and the beads are people and when you put all the different people together, they form one unified presence.
- Where one or two are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.
- Lay your problems on God and He holds it all together.
- Looking at the hole that goes through the bead: We all have room for God (the string) to fill us with His love, which makes the connection stronger.
- Looking at all of the supplies: How so many things can work together to make a final product.

Hammer

- Can be used to make a point (hitting the nail on the head) or can represent missing the point (not hitting the mark.)
- Can be used to remove things that are no longer needed.
- Can be used to build up or to destroy. It is our choice
- It can be used to close something or to pry something open.
- It has many different parts and each has an important function.
- Just as we can direct our aim with the hammer we can also do so with our thoughts.

Magnets

- What do we attract into our lives?
- What pulls us towards things?
- How to stick to one another through problems.
- Sticking to your spiritual path and values.
- Positive affirmations: I am like a magnet because I draw good things to myself. I attract positive things to my life.
- What pulled you away from your path this week?

Play dough

- How we can shape thought, character, and Unity principles.
- God accepts different forms.
- God expressing through creativity.

Butterfly

- Represents seasons & cycles – Birth, death, rebirth – in the flow of life.
- How sometimes we go through a struggle to become whole – like the caterpillar struggles to be free of the cocoon.
- How we judge ourselves – are we a butterfly or caterpillar? We are attracted to the sweetness in life.

Building Blocks

- Diversity: Different colors, shapes, uniqueness, balance – Used together creates something wonderful.
- Sum of the whole is greater than its parts.
- More than one way to accomplish things.
- The possibilities are endless.
- We are always expanding in our understanding of what we can create.
- Each block has its own function – they are all equal.
- They aren't functional until you use them, like our talents.
- We need to work together.
- If they are knocked down they can always be built back up.
- Stronger when you build the second time – learning from experience.

Basket with Lego Pieces

- When some part of your life is in pieces, like the Legos, how would you handle this? It appears that, at first, there is no way to put the pieces back the way they were. However, the basket represents God and his presence always encircling and enfolding every part of our lives. If we let go of worrying over the separate pieces and let God take charge and get peaceful and quiet within ourselves, God will give us the wisdom and power to create something new.