

Friendly Presence Guide for Adult Volunteers -- PYM Young Friends



Thank you for your interest in serving as a chaperone (or Friendly Presence) for the PYM Young Friends Program! You and other adults willing and able to serve make possible the spiritual home and community that Young Friends provides its participants. Your participation is essential to the program's vitality!

The PYM Young Friends program provides a spiritual home for high-school-aged Quakers and Quaker-friendly youth through explorations of community, spirituality, leadership, and fun! We seek to be a community in which everyone feels accepted, cared about, included, and safe. Additionally, we seek to offer opportunities for growth and leadership development in youth.

Being a Friendly Presence -- "FP"

Friendly Presence (or FP) is the name we give our adult chaperones in PYM Youth Programs. It's a light-hearted title that also has importance – each word!

Friendly

"Friendly" in this context refers both to "Quakerly" and "kindly." FPs should have some experience in or affiliation with Quakerism and the Quaker community such that they can (and gladly will) contribute to young people's development into Quaker adults. Additionally, behaving in a way that is approachable, receptive, welcoming, understanding, supportive or positive is also an important aspect of the friendliness of a FP!

Presence

Your presence is what makes this program work – thank you! The Young Friends community is about creating a space for the full presence of all of its community members – youth and adults alike. You being whoever you are fully (your full presence) will give Young Friends permission to be whoever they are fully (their full presence). Your presence also has a lot of different functions: sometimes the adult-ish-ness of your presence alone is enough to encourage Young Friends to double check their boisterousness for safety; other times your quality of presence during worship may help a Young Friend feel safe enough to share a message rising within them; or perhaps your cheerful enthusiasm for a chore will inspire the Young Friends in your chore group to discover what they can actually enjoy about cleaning bathrooms and toilets (one example! **Whatever it is, your fullest presence contributes to the wellbeing of the community, and we are grateful for it.**)

A Young Friend may find you to be a safe presence, and approach you with a problem or upset. In these cases, it is best to listen empathetically, to take their experience and concerns seriously. Give honest answers and be real about what you know and what you do not know. Be very conservative about what you promise, and support their ability to problem-solve for themselves. Avoid any urges to be the superhero and fix everything! One way to do that is to involve others, either by pulling in another FP or Young Friends staff, with the Young Friend's permission, or by helping the Young Friend to brainstorm other supportive people they can reach out to and inform to be a network of support. Authentically expressing whatever supportive sentiments come up for you - sadness that they have to deal with a situation, fear that they are at risk of injury, etc. - is okay if it doesn't shift the focus away from the young person's feelings and needs. Sometimes a Young Friend will approach an adult because of an experience they know you share. In that case carefully sharing about yourself is fine. If it's a sensitive matter (especially related to sexuality or bodies), extra caution and thoughtfulness about personal sharing is best. (see section: "Essential, Healthy Boundaries")

While having these conversations, FPs should adhere to the Rule of Three (a FP and a Young Friend shall never be alone together -- see the section “Guidelines”) as well as the program schedule. A conversation of this kind may justify missing some program, however this should be done only in consultation with the Coordinator or Assistant. Keep in mind that these conversations may require some kind of follow-up, and if that seems possible it’s important to be honest with Young Friends about that in the moment.

PYM staff are mandatory reporters of abuse, as are FPs during their service with youth. For help understanding this responsibility, check out the Mandatory Reporter Training available at: www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu (plan 1½ - 3 hours if you’d like to take it). PYM Youth Programs staff are trained as mandated reporters, and are equipped to determine whether something is reportable. There are lots of things that are not reportable that would still require some kind of follow up. Please keep the Facilitator or the Assistant in the loop (even generally) about any sensitive conversations, especially if you feel unclear about how best to proceed, so that we can figure out appropriate next steps together that reflect our standard practices. If necessary, staff can guide you through the process of making a report.

“Presence” can also refer to substances and gadgets that make us less present. Young Friends are discouraged from using cell phones (texting, calling, web surfing, etc.), personal headphones, and other technology during gatherings, and are not allowed to use them at all during program time. Sometimes as adults there are things outside of Young Friends that we *must* attend to during a gathering (or even leave a gathering to attend to). That is fine. We also ask that you use your discernment about the degree to which you are removing yourself from the gathering and the community and stay in communication with the Facilitator or Assistant about this. No one at a Young Friends gathering is permitted to use illegal substances, and Friendly Presences are expected to abstain from alcohol use at all gatherings.

The Roles of Adults in the Young Friends Community

In order to have sufficiently developed a perspective on adolescence, it’s helpful to have some distance from it. We require that FPs for the Young Friends program be *at least* 21 years old. It’s our job to be adults who allow lots of room for experimentation and self-determination while also bringing firm boundaries when necessary. Being full adults with our older perspective and thinking is helpful to young people. This work is not about reliving one’s adolescence, but rather about making space for Young Friends to grow and experiment, bringing your knowledge, experience, and discernment in with all the fun. It can be helpful to think about not only applying all your knowledge, experience and discernment to Young Friends’ situations, but to model applying it to your own growth and development as well! Not everyone who is 21 (or older) is ready to be a Friendly Presence; – FPs are always able to participate at the discretion of the Facilitator.

Reminder – What it’s like to be a teen, and what teens can be like

Adolescence is a time of exploration in many realms – identity, belief, skill, ideology, sexuality, physical and mental capacity, spirituality, and more! Young Friends is a community where it’s safe to do some of that exploration, experimenting with different possibilities for a sense of self and behavior. Part of that experimentation is about how much autonomy the youth have over their own lives and selves. They need freedom to try things out and even make a few mistakes. They also need boundaries so that the mistakes they make don’t have big consequences. Sometimes a Young Friend’s experimentation may be uncomfortable for FPs. Remember not to make assumptions—this is another person to get to know, and their presentation doesn’t mean anything inherent about who they are or what they are like. Young Friends also may use the presence of lots of safe adults to work out some of their questions about their growth and changes, sending flirtatious, antagonistic, or other potentially confusing messages to FPs. Regardless of a Young Friends’ behavior, it’s the responsibility of FPs to impose strong, safe, caring boundaries that respect the Young Friends community’s self-determination to the greatest extent possible.

Essential, Healthy Boundaries

We ask that all Friendly Presences keep healthy boundaries in mind, both during **and outside of program times**. While the legal expectations and obligations of *in loco parentis* apply during gatherings, Young Friends don't stop looking to FPs to model behavior and boundaries after programs end.

We recognize that some interactions can seem harmless (examples are hugs, sharing information about your personal life with a Young Friend, or having a conversation on social media like Facebook or Instagram Messenger.) The guiding queries we suggest for FPs in discerning whether to engage with a Young Friend, particularly outside of program time is:

- ***Is this interaction for me or for the Young Friend?***
- ***Does the interaction serve the Young Friend's need for connection or information?***
- ***Would this interaction be modeling appropriate boundaries if we were in person?***

If the answer isn't a clear "it's for the Young Friend and would be appropriate under any circumstance" then please reach out to the Program Facilitator or Assistant to discuss how to proceed!

Another important concern is sexual and romantic boundaries. **Under no circumstance is it appropriate for a FP to be involved with a Young Friend in a romantic or sexual way.** This not only threatens a cohesive sense of community, but also introduces confusing issues of authority and violates the legal expectations and obligations that FPs have as surrogate parents. Additionally, it is the responsibility of Friendly Presences to behave in such a way that they will not be interpreted as flirting, "hitting on," "coming onto," or suggesting a romantic or sexual involvement with Young Friends in any way. When behavior that could be interpreted as flirtation is present it can feel confusing, violating, or unsafe for Young Friends and can result in damage to the youth, the FP and the program.

Guidelines

The Young Friends Guidelines are discerned and approved by the Young Friends community in Business Meeting. Because of this, they shift occasionally. An up-to-date version of the guidelines is available online at <http://www.pym.org/young-friends/events/guidelines/>. Additionally, guidelines are posted around the space at gatherings. Please make yourself familiar with the Guidelines either before arriving or immediately upon arrival.

Nuts and Bolts of Gatherings!

Locations, Length, Amenities

Young Friends gatherings vary in regards to location, length, and degree of overlap with events in the wider Yearly Meeting. Some take place in one of the over 100 meetinghouses in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting over the course of one weekend – from a Friday evening (around 7PM) until Sunday around 12PM. Young Friends also participate in the yearly meeting wide day-long Fall and Spring Continuing Sessions on Saturdays, and this may be part of a weekend retreat. Each spring, one of the weekend events takes place at Camp Swatara in conjunction with Caln Quarterly Meeting's weekend retreat there. There are currently three extended gatherings that take place during the year – one over the Christmas holiday school break (which varies in location but always takes place December 27th – 30th), one in July with the rest of the Yearly Meeting at Annual Sessions (typically 5 days and four nights on a college campus), and a late summer gathering in August.

There are different amenities available at each of these different locations. At meetinghouses, we all forego showers and sleep on the floor with sleeping mats and sleeping bags. At the camps or dorms there are bunk beds with mattresses in shared sleeping spaces and bathhouses or hallway bathrooms with showers (which have varying degrees of privacy).

Schedules

While there is a lot of variation in gatherings, certain things in the schedule are pretty consistent:

Opening Program

On the first night of a gathering we have an opening program to get everyone settled in. This typically starts with a quick go-round-the-circle saying names and preferred pronoun, followed by big group games that help us get to know each other's names and stories, and moving on to an orientation to the community and the weekend.

FP Orientation

A meeting of the FPs usually happens at some point on the first night of a gathering, at which we share about ourselves, review expectations of FPs, relate any known needs of individuals and community dynamics and review the schedule and any times of the weekend that will need particular types of adult attention.

Worship Sharing and Small Groups

Worship sharing happens in pre-assigned small groups (the same group with which you'll be doing chores throughout the gathering), and it typically happens every night of a gathering. Worship sharing questions are written by the Nurturing Committee. Often Young Friends are experienced in taking leadership as facilitators during worship sharing, although sometimes it will fall to a FP to step into that role or to guide a youth facilitator. During worship sharing it is important both to share something real and meaningful from our life experience as adults and to maintain appropriate boundaries. Take the time to notice your comfort level in sharing your responses and discern about what it would be best to share. Keep the following queries in mind: *What rising in me feels like an authentic response to this query? What am I modeling for Young Friends with this response? Is that what I want to model? Is it best for Young Friends' growth, wholeness and wellbeing to have such a model?*

Bedtime

At night, all Young Friends check in with the Program Assistant by 11:00 PM. It's helpful if FPs can encourage Young Friends to head towards sleeping quarters, brush teeth, get into pajamas and get quieted down for the evening. We aim for lights out at 11:30 PM.

Meals

Meals at most Young Friends gatherings are prepared largely by prep crews. For longer gatherings, a FP might be paid to serve as a cook. We gather for announcements and then grace before most meals though not breakfast, as folks trickle in slowly. There are several different traditional graces, and the community is often open to someone teaching something new. Mealtime is a great time to get to know a new Young Friend! Keep a special eye out for Young Friends who may not have integrated into the community yet, and join them or invite them into a group that you are with.

Chores

At most gatherings, Young Friends do a variety of chores at assigned times in their small groups, including: meal prep and clean up, cleaning bathrooms, cleaning public spaces before bedtime, and a big group cleanup of all the spaces at the end of the gathering. FPs have a few important roles during these chore chunks.

- Providing supplies- FPs can often find cleaning supplies in one of the large plastic tubs that we bring to the gathering (usually labeled "cleaning supplies"). For larger items (brooms, mop, vacuum) check with the Facilitator or the Assistant.
- Quality and control and attitude control - FPs should be modeling positive attitude and chipping in to the cleaning effort while also double-checking the quality of their group's cleaning.
- Attendance- FPs should know when they have a chore coming up (it will be listed on the schedules posted around the gathering) and make sure that all members of the small group know they have a chore coming up too and then make it to the chore.

Workshops and Program Time

Each gathering has time that is programmed, often with worship and/or meeting for worship with attention to business, a choice of workshops, a service project, or a big-group experience of some sort. These programmed times are not optional for Young Friends (though we can be flexible and humane around that). Depending on the program and the needs of the community they may or may not be optional for FPs.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Young Friends hold Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business at many gatherings, unless Clerks discern there is not significant business to attend to. This is a time for the Young Friends community to discern the guidance of Spirit as we understand it. It is primarily a space for the youth to discern. Adult contributions are discouraged, for several reasons: they carry extra weight as adults have greater power and authority in the world and in the Young Friends community. Additionally, adults are used to being listened to and taken seriously more so than youth, and so often speak more freely and with more confidence. This raises concerns about the time adult contributions take, the ratio of adult contributions to youth contributions and the possibility of an adult offering something that would have been offered by a young person (and served as an opportunity for the young person to exercise their growing voice and confidence in this context) had the adult not shared. However, at times adults may be needed to give information on a subject at Meeting for Business, and this is helpful and acceptable (though we should keep in mind the above concerns when we do so). Adults should keep in mind that there are Young Friends clerks, and adults must be recognized by them if they have something to contribute? Adults are also welcome to participate by worshiping or praying for Young Friends in their discernment.

Free Time

Most gatherings have a few hours of free time for Young Friends. Space expectations will usually be clarified on the first night of a gathering, including where Young Friends can be during free time. It's a good idea for FPs to disperse during free time, hanging out with different groups of Young Friends, or taking a walk and noting where different crowds and individuals are hanging out.

Wink is a game beloved to many Young Friends which may happen during free time. It involves wrestling, race-crawling, and kissing on the cheek or hand. Wink is wonderful, fun, hilarious, and a bit dangerous. It may only happen if two Friendly Presences are willing to be present for the whole game and if the med kit is present. FPs can act as referees of a sort if they know the rules. The most important rule is that when someone says "stop," everyone repeats the call and stops moving and talking. Due to the highly physical nature of the game, it is not appropriate for Friendly Presences to play Wink with Young Friends.

Late Night

Late night is an extension of bedtime until 1am that can happen at gatherings given several preconditions:

1. Young Friends must request a Late Night in person before lunch on the day of the requested Late Night
2. If Late Night happened at the previous Young Friends gathering, YFs must have proved themselves capable of behaving appropriately during late night and of getting to bed quietly without waking those who do not attend in order to have a Late Night at the current gathering.
3. The space in which the gathering is happening must be conducive to Late Night with sufficient space and sound protection between the sleeping area and the Late Night area and sufficient distance between the Late Night area and any sleeping neighbors unaffiliated with the program.
4. There must be at least two Friendly Presences willing to stay up to supervise Late Night.

When the preconditions for Late Night are met, there are some conventions as to how it is carried out:

- It happens in a single space (usually one big room)
- Everyone who attends Late Night must be completely ready for bed (dressed in pajamas, teeth brushed, any night-time medications taken or brought with, etc.) and stay in the space until Late Night is over.
- At 1 AM (or earlier if everyone agrees on that) the whole group quiets down together (for instance singing a calming song or having a moment of silence) and silently returns to the sleeping area. This way there is only one (hopefully very quiet) disturbance in the sleeping room, so that those who do not attend can have a (mostly) uninterrupted rest.

Closure

There's often a lot going on during the last morning of a gathering with all the packing up and cleaning the space we have to do. Whenever possible, we like to fit in an activity that gives closure of our time together in Young Friends as well. Sometimes this is something that happens in the whole group, or sometimes it happens in small groups. One activity that gives closure in a big group is an **evaluation**. The evaluation is a time when everyone reflects together on the gathering, noting what went well and what did not go well. Evaluations can have FPs present or not (or present for the first part and separate for the second), depending on the needs of Young Friends. Another big group closure activity is the **stomp circle**, when everyone gets in a close circle with arms around shoulders and shuffles in one direction around the circle until someone says "stop!" to share someone or something they are grateful for from the gathering. If we break into small groups for closure we may do an **affirmation circle**, in which each person in the circle takes a turn being the focus of attention while others tell them what they appreciate about them. Affirmation circles can also be written down instead of done out loud, depending on the time available and preference of the group.

Meeting for Worship

During most gatherings we worship at least once in our Young Friends group, and once with the host meeting. Often we forego a traditional Meeting for Worship for a **Worship Experiment** – some kind of planned or programmed worship experience that helps us connect authentically with Spirit. Friendly Presences as well as Young Friends are invited to consider planning and leading a Worship Experiment. Nearing the closing worship with a host meeting, we often discuss meeting for worship and remind Friends of different ways to center. Regardless, some Young Friends find the silence challenging, and FPs should disperse among Young Friends to do grounding or quieting as necessary.

Interacting with Young Friends Outside a Gathering

Sometimes it happens that FPs run into Young Friends outside a gathering. When the primary connection is through the Young Friends program (rather than through a family relationship, for instance), it is the expectation that interactions and communications will take place within the context of the program and follow the rules and guidelines of the program (the Rule of Three, smoking policy, and prohibition of drugs and alcohol may be most relevant here). and with the knowledge of the Program Facilitator. If an interaction goes beyond a casual meeting or interaction, FPs are expected to bring the interaction to the attention of the Program Facilitator, who needs to be aware of the ongoing relationships in the community.

Social Media

It is the expectation that FPs will not initiate contact through social media (for instance, sending friend requests on Facebook) with Young Friends they meet at gatherings. FPs may respond to contact from Young Friends at their discretion (for instance, accepting friend requests on Facebook *from* and initiated by Young Friends). FPs should not initiate private messaging with Young Friends on social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) or otherwise. If a Young Friend initiates, FPs may respond, but we ask that they keep in mind the spirit of the rule of three when doing so and inform staff about these interactions.

We ask that private messages with Young Friends be shared with the Facilitator by email or at the next gathering, as staff are the primary individuals responsible for the wellbeing of Young Friends. An exception to this is the adult Clerk communicating with Young Friends Clerks about clerking business. If a Young Friend is communicating with an FP with more frequency or intimacy than the FP is comfortable, the FP should report the behavior to the Facilitator; staff are prepared to intervene with grace and care for the Young Friend.

Interacting with Former Young Friends

One draw to service as a Friendly Presence is the opportunity to mentor young people in a relationship that could potentially last for many years. While PYM supports FPs to continue relationships and mentorship with former Young Friends into adulthood, these relationships must also be grounded in the awareness of the power-dynamic established by the original authority relationship of being a Friendly Presence and a Young Friend. There is, and probably always will be, a significant power differential between an individual (in this case, a former Young Friend) and the people who have had authority over them in their youth (in this case, Friendly Presences). This power difference makes the process of establishing a relationship as fellow adults or peers ethically tricky. Bearing that in mind, Friendly Presences are expected to abide by the following:

- Until a FP shares a community of peers with a former Young Friend (for example: being part of the life and business of a monthly meeting together, actively participating in the Young Adult Friends program, being in a class or workshop together, serving as Friendly Presences together, etc.), the FP should continue relating to the former Young Friend within the guidelines of the Young Friends program and this FP Guide. Of course, after a certain length of time, this may seem a bit excessive (for example, if the former Young Friend is in their thirties and active in the life of PYM but not explicitly in a community of peers with their former FP) in which case, FPs are encouraged to use their best judgement and check in with the Program Facilitator to discuss any ambiguity.
- FPs may invite former Young Friends to participate in communities of peers with them, but only as it enhances the former Young Friend's growth and fulfills their needs. FPs must not invite or pressure former Young Friends to participate in communities of peers with them to fulfill FPs' needs. FPs are expected to notify the Young Friends Program Facilitator or the Youth Religious Life Coordinator when making these invitations and to operate with great self-awareness in this regard.
- In community with former Young Friends, FPs must consider whether or not this person might be under their care as a Young Friend again – for instance, if the former Young Friend comes back to visit a Young Friends gathering at which the FP is serving – before treating that person as a peer.
- It's strongly recommended that Friendly Presences not engage in romantic relationship with a person who was at Young Friends while you were serving as a FP. If you choose to do this, it absolutely may not be within two years of the period of time during which the Young Friend was in your care. It must only happen following the establishment of a peer-relationship in the ways expressed above. It is also strongly recommended that the FP consult with the Young Friends Facilitator and/or a clearness committee before engaging in a romantic relationship with a former Young Friend.
- Friendly Presences must be aware of and open to the possibility that the power differential may always make it feel unsafe or uncomfortable for a former Young Friend to be treated as a peer or to treat a FP as a peer. Additionally, because of the power differential FPs must know that a former Young Friend may feel pressure – even unconsciously – to respond to requests in a particular way. Due to these factors, some good ways to proceed in a peer-relationship include: talking together about the power dynamics of the relationship, inquiring as to the former Young Friend's needs and double- and triple-checking what feels okay for the former Young Friend (including activities engaged in together in community, subjects talked about, etc.) both in the moment and repeatedly over time.

Logistical Details - Service Hours and Reimbursements

FPs are volunteers and so do not pay to attend gatherings. As a PYM volunteer, your hours of service are recorded (estimated by the Program Facilitator, though if you would like to send the exact total of your preparation time, your travel time, and your time serving at the gathering, you are welcome!) and your travel costs are reimburse-able. Please save any and all receipts for reimbursement and send the Google maps directions of the route you took for mileage

reimbursement.

Young Friends Friendly Presence Commitment

I _____, have read and understood “FP Guide-Young Friends” and agree to abide by
(Print name)
the policies laid out therein. I understand that inability or refusal to abide by these guidelines may result in my removal from the PYM Young Friends Community.

Signature: _____ Date: _____