

A Youth Ministry “Go Bag”

Ready to go, always prepped and stocked with what you might need.

Years ago, way back before cell phones and iPads, I was taking a group of youth to a youth event in Slippery Rock, PA. We got into a traffic jam caused by a cattle truck that had jackknifed (somehow) on the interstate. It was going to be hours before we were going to be moving again. No DVD player, no videos to watch on the internet, just two adults and 6 youth in a van in the middle of the interstate. Thankfully, I had my youth ministry go bag.

A go bag is just that, a bag (backpack) ready to go, always prepped and stocked with what you might need. Every youth worker is going to have special needs or items specific to the needs of their group (or individual), especially when it comes to medical and health issues that might affect one or more of your young people. Finally, at the end, there is a list of recreation supplies and games (and how to play) that go with them. These supplies were chosen because they can serve multiple purposes.

Absolute Must Haves

- *Backpack/Go Bag* - A standard school size backpack with organizing pockets. I prefer a brightly colored backpack that's more eye-catching and more easily spotted in a crowd. How the backpack is set up organizationally/pockets, is up to you. I like more pockets so that everything has a place and easy to find.
- *Parental Permission and Medical Forms* - Never, ever, go anywhere without a form for every person attending, including adults. I keep hard copies in a Ziplock bag (waterproofing) in the laptop sleeve of the backpack, and I keep digital copies on my phone. I also share a digital copy with another adult.
- *Small first-aid kit* - A small basic one along with a XL pair of nitrile gloves and a CPR face shield. Why XL? Because XL gloves will fit anyone, too small and they can be useless to someone with larger hands. I also add any individual specific items such as EpiPen, glucose tablets, etc. for individual youth needs. These items are usually provided by parents/guardians if needed.
- *Water bottle* - Not only for your personal use but can also double as an object to pass around or grab for a game.

Other Miscellaneous Items

- Portable power bank and charging cable(s)
- Hand sanitizer
- Emergency poncho - not only for rain but can also serve as something to sit on if the ground is wet.
- Multitool - You just never know when you might need a screwdriver, scissors, pocketknife, etc. No need for the expensive ones.
- Small bottle of sunscreen

I also keep several game supplies in my go bag for when you find yourself needing to kill time like we did on the interstate. The game supplies stay in a large pouch to keep the go bag organized. I've included a list of games and how to play them using the suggested supplies. There are plenty of games that require little to no supplies, and the recreation items can be adapted to fit your group's needs. This list should help get you started.

- 2-3 mechanical pencils and 2-3 colored pens - for tallying points, writing on paper, etc.
- Deck of cards - Not only good for traditional card games such as Spades or Rummy, but can be used in mixing up groups, randomly identifying people for games, etc. Uno is another popular, inexpensive option.
- Pair of dice - Lots of games use dice.
- 2-3 quarters or other coins - Useful for flipping to create randomness in games such as Crows and Cranes or Pulse. It can also be used as an item to pass around.
- Ball of yarn or string (50 feet) - Multiple uses such as 1) identify teams by cutting off a 12' piece to tie around an arm, 2) lay out on the ground to define a playing area or boundary 3) or a game such as blind shapes.
- Small notebook (4x6) - Use for tallying scores, scrap paper for games that involve writing things down, etc. Also useful for writing down any details about an incident report.
- Clip-on Bluetooth speaker - music is always a good to have whether just hanging out or to use in a game.

Backpack Recreation

- Mixers
 - *Card Mixer* (deck of Cards)- Using the deck of cards, pass the cards out. Each person mingles around trading cards. When you say stop, everyone stops. Have everyone form groups according to their card like - kings form a group, same suit forms a group, or one of each suit forms a group, etc.
 - *Who Am I?* (paper and pens/pencils) On each piece of paper, write the name of a celebrity, or an animal, or a cartoon character, etc. Give each piece of paper to a participant and ask them to hold it up to their forehead without looking at it. Each person walks around trying to figure out who/what they are by asking yes or no questions. Ex. Am I person? Am I in movies?
- Games
 - *Roll to 100* (dice, scrap paper, pen)- Give everyone a piece of paper and sit in a circle. Place a pen in the middle of the circle and give a single die to one person. The first person rolls the die trying to roll a six. Anytime a 6 is rolled, that person grabs the pen and starts writing 1,2,3,4,5,6, etc. as fast as they can. The next person then takes the die to try to roll a six. If they do they grab the pen. If a 6 is not rolled, then the next person in line rolls. This continues around the circle until someone gets to a 100 - 97, 98, 99, 100!
 - *Mini Farkle* (dice) - Sitting in a circle, each person is going to roll the die when it's their turn. When a person rolls the die, they score whatever number comes up. They can take as many rolls as they want, accumulating the score with each roll. However, if they roll a 1 during their turn, they lose all the accumulated points in that turn. They can also choose to pass the die at any time. Once they pass the die, they bank those points for good. These points can't be lost if a 1 is rolled. First one to reach the pre-determined total wins.
 - *Fishbowl* (scrap paper, pens/pencils, and something to collect paper in - bowl, hat, bag, etc.) - Divide the group into two teams and give everyone three scraps of paper and have them write on

- the paper a noun - a person, place, or thing. One noun per slip of paper. Gather all the slips and place them in the hat. Each team will try to guess as many of the nouns as possible in a time frame such as a minute. The first person in line will draw a slip of paper and try to get their teams to guess what it is. Then pass the hat to the next person and so on until time is up. Then the second team will get a turn. After each round the score is tallied and all the slips go back into the hat. The first round, players can say anything except the word on the paper or "rhymes with" or "sounds like". The second round, they can only use one word as the clue. The third round they cannot use any words or sounds, just motions like in charades. Play concludes after the three rounds.
- *Crows and Cranes* (quarter and yarn to make boundaries) - You need a space where people can run back and forth. Using yarn or other objects, set up an end line on both sides of the playing area. Divide the group into two groups and have them form a line face to face with the other group but more than an arms-length away. Assign each group to be either the crows or the cranes. The leader flips the coin, if it lands heads then you yell "crows," if it lands tails, you yell "cranes". Whichever group you call out will be the chasers and the other group the chase-ee. The chasers try to tag the chase-ee before they get to their end line. If they are tagged, they will then join the other group. After each round, the groups line up again and the coin is flipped. This continues until everyone is on the same side or only a few remain.
 - *Up Jenks* (quarter) - This game works best if sitting at a long table or on a hard surface. Divide the group into two groups and have them sit side by side facing the other group. Give the quarter to someone in the middle and ask them to pass the quarter to the left or right. Everyone then starts to pretend as if they have the quarter and is passing it back and forth. This continues for a little bit until the other team says, "Up Jenks". At this point everyone raises their hands in a closed fist. Then the other team says, "Down Jenks" and everyone brings their hands down on the table or floor and slapping the table or floor with an open hand. The other teams then gets three guesses to determine which hand has the quarter. After the guessing, the other teams goes.
 - *Pulse* (water bottle or similar) - Divide into two groups and have them sit side by side holding hands and facing the other team. At one end place a water bottle or other item that can be grabbed. At the opposite end, you the leader sits with the quarter. You are going to flip the quarter and when the quarter lands heads, each person at the end (where you are) will start the pulse by squeezing their hand and sending the pulse down the line. When the last person receives the pulse, they try to grab the object before the other team. Continue playing by rotating the line so that everyone gets a chance to be first or last.
 - *Blind Shapes* (yarn) - Have everyone form a circle and pass the yarn around the circle so that the yarn forms a circle as well. Each person holds onto the section of the yarn. Have everyone close their eyes and ask them to form a shape (the yarn will act like a line in the shape) without looking. They are allowed to communicate with each other, just not see. When they think they are ready, have them open their eyes to see how they did. Begin with an easy shape and progressively more complicated.
 - *Tell Me About the Time You...* (paper and pens) - Pass out the paper to each person and invite them to write about a time they... did something odd or met a someone famous, etc. and write their name on the paper. Example - Tell me about the time ... I drove a golf cart into a lake. After everyone has written their basic story down, collect the papers and choose one of the stories. Then choose three people to sit together facing the rest of the group. One of these three people has to be the story that you choose. The group is going to try to figure out who is telling truth and who is lying. Each of the three people will pretend as if the story is theirs. The actual person must always tell the truth, the other two of course will lie, pretending it's their story. The

rest of the group gets to ask questions to anyone of the three. When the group is ready to guess, they can make their choice of whose story it is. You can play multiple rounds.

- *Hot Potato - No One Is Out Version* (Bluetooth speaker, phone with music, and 5-6 random object from your go bag) - Have the group sit or stand in a circle. Give an object to someone in the circle. When the music starts, they begin passing the object around the circle, the object is not to get caught with the object when the music stops. The twist here is that if you get caught you remain in the game. Now, every time you receive an object, you must pass the object around your head before passing it along to the next person. Play continues. Then introduce another object to the circle and then stop the music. Each time a person is caught, and a person can be caught multiple times, they have to do something before passing the object; 1) around the head, 2) under a leg, 3) under the other leg, 4) they get to choose someone else to be caught. Play continues until you are ready to move on.