



## **Teen Village 2022-2023 Structure & Details**

### **Why Teen Village**

Between busy schedules and social norms, youth today have very little time to slow down and reflect on who they are, and what is real in their lives. Developmentally they are yearning to belong while also seeking to understand what is unique about themselves. Consciously and subconsciously they are sorting out what values of home and culture they want to carry forward into adulthood.

Many teens are aware of bigger political issues, societal pressures, and environmental concerns, experiencing moments of anxiety and stress, fear and hopelessness more than ever before. Many feel the normal shifting tides of friendships and peer pressures, the struggle to be seen as capable while still learning how to take responsibility. Social media has changed so much in the way youth communicate. It has changed the way they learn how to present themselves, and how to navigate the world around them.

Teen Village is an opportunity for youth to connect with themselves, and each other in a meaningful way. Something sweet and magical happens when a group of youth get together to talk and create. They open up. They listen, laugh, feel, and share. They trust. By providing a safe space with a subtle structure we open the door for young people to rediscover the importance of authentic communication and the courage inherent in vulnerability; face to face, heart to heart. From this place they often realize that others experience the things they do, and they find belonging and support as well as empathy for themselves and others.

### **What Happens During Each Village**

#### **Reflection & Perspective**

Villages include quiet, reflective spaces where participants are given time to respond to consistently presented prompts which can support youth to really check in with

themselves. These reflections are saved, much like a diary remaining available to them for each village, and are then presented to them upon graduation of the program, often years later. It is in these reflections youth gain the perspective of change or stagnation around issues that may be presenting themselves in their lives.

### **Sharing & Conversations**

After everyone has had a chance to write privately, we open it up for sharing. From the shares, developmental themes naturally arise and become a part of a group conversation. Sometimes this looks like giggling about crushes.

Sometimes it looks like complaining about school. Sometimes fears are shared, or stress about grades, college, sports, or performing arts. Sometimes sadness and confusion about shifting social dynamics. Sometimes anxiety about global issues, or family systems. The ways these conversations arise are as varied as the participants themselves. In them however, we find universality, and connection – every time.

### **How Teen Village Works**

Individual villages have the same youth meeting together each time in order to build familiarity and trust. Groups are initially formed according to grade level by parents registering online, grades 7-10. The number of villages per grade level are based on interest and the mentor's availability.

Each village is named according to the grade level- TV 7 (Teen Village 7th Grade), TV 8, TV 9, and so on. Some grade levels have more than one village, such as TV 7a and TV 7b. In the fall, TV 7a will become TV 8a and so on.

Most groups move up and continue meeting throughout each grade level building upon the previously established foundation of vulnerability and trust.

### **Size of Villages**

There are 6-8 youth in each village. Each village has its own personality and energy. It is up to the mentor to decide if and when new youth may be introduced into the village in order to build and maintain healthy balance within villages. Ideally this will be done



at the beginning of the school year but may happen at any time for the integrity of the group.

If a new youth is added to an existing village, the mentor will communicate the decision to the youth and the parents for that village before the new youth joins. If a youth needs to leave a village midway through the year, we request that youth attend the village prior to departure for closure. If a village drops below 5 participants the decision may be made to close that village.

### **Frequency & Schedule**

Teen Villages are typically held once a month during the school year through June. The month that villages start depends on if that village is new or continuing from the previous school year. The dates and times for each village are pre-set for the school year and available online by grade level sessions. Each village lasts one and a half hours, with 15 minutes of clean up afterwards if meeting in person. Virtual Villages could be an hour to an hour and a half.

To follow an academic calendar and increase participation we have broken Teen Village down into sessions. Fall is September - December (ending at the start of winter breaks) Winter is January-March (ending at the start of spring break) and Spring is April- June. We do not hold Teen Village in July and August off to allow for vacations and down time with family and friends.

### **Communication**

The primary form of communication between the mentor and parents is email. Parents are to respond to emails in a timely manner if requested by the mentor. Text messages to the mentor are to be limited to emergencies and youth attendance the day of the village. Text messages from the mentor will be used for the above as well as seeking a parent response if needed in regards to an email sent out.

One email reminder to parents, and youth with emails, will come at least 48 hours

prior to a village meeting from the mentor. A reflection email will come to parents at the end of each month to reflect on how the village is going.

## **Youth Privacy**

It is imperative to the work we do that Teen Village truly be a safe space for our youth. It is a brave space where they are learning how to trust themselves and others. You will always be a primary relationship in their lives. As they are embarking on their journey to adulthood it is important that they also feel themselves separate from you. In this way they can begin to find their own voice, their own inner compass. We ask that you as parents support us in this work by allowing your youth to have this private space. We ask that parents not press youth for what was shared in the Village. If your youth shares something from Teen Village with you please do not share it with others. If you feel concerned please reach out to Naiya.

## **Commitment**

### **Parents/Guardians:**

Due to varied schedules and busy lives before beginning Teen Village there is a mandatory parent/guardian meeting where all guardians will be able to ask questions, meet the mentors and decide meeting schedules moving forward. This meeting is held over zoom and for the 22-23 Session there are **three options for dates**, they are listed as follows: the Zoom link will be shared prior to the meeting.

- Thursday, October 27th from 6p - 7p via Zoom
- Thursday, November 3rd from 6p - 7p via Zoom
- Monday, November 7th from 6p - 7p via Zoom

### **Youth:**

After attending the first village we will ask that youth and their families commit to that village for the rest of the session. After thorough discussion with the mentor

and the group, if a youth should choose to leave a village, financial reimbursement will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

### **COVID-19**

In the event that COVID-19 restrictions are in place we will respond accordingly, depending on the phase declared. If Stay at Home orders are in place, villages will meet via Zoom. If small groups are allowed to meet, villages will meet outside with social distance, as weather allows. If a family would not be comfortable with their child attending under the circumstances outlined above, or has other general concerns regarding Covid protocol, please get in touch with the mentor. It's important to us for the Village to be accessible and safe for everyone.

### **Illness & Absence**

Due to COVID-19, if your youth is ill, they should remain home. If practical, an attempt will be made to bring them into the village by phone. In the event that the mentor is ill for a village, if possible, that village will meet via Zoom. If that is not possible that village will be canceled. Due to rescheduling challenges it will not be rescheduled and there will be reimbursement for that village.

If your youth is unable to attend a village, please notify the mentor via email or text. If a youth is absent from a village without word of it ahead of time, parents will be notified via text at the beginning of the village meeting if possible, or after the village to check in.

Repeated absences affect the security of the container created for youth to feel safe in sharing. Repeated absences will be addressed with the mentor and the parents.

### **Cost & Payment**

The cost for Teen Village for the 2022-2023 school year will vary depending on if a village is just forming or continuing from the previous year due to staggered starting months. Each village is \$25 per session. Families can pay the total amount for the year in full online following the Parent Meeting, or reach out to Naiya to inquire about



payment plans. There is no financial reimbursement for absences. In order for a youth to attend a village, payment must be current. It is important to us that this program be accessible: please, contact us about scholarships and discounted rates that are available and arranged on a case by case basis.

### **Location**

All Teen Villages take place at the Body Basics and Beyond Clubhouse in Ashland. It is 3 blocks up from the public library. If Stay at Home orders are put in place, Villages will be held virtually through Zoom.