



Encounter Groups

Each year at Rally on the Mountain (ROM), youth are broken up into what are called Encounter Groups. These can be thought of as their “family” for the weekend; they spend time together having fun, tackling challenges, and ultimately building relationships with people they might not already know. Typically, groups are determined by ages. For instance, at ROM

2018, there were two groups of 11-12- year-old youth because that was the biggest age group. The groups were broken up this way so that they were able to more effectively connect and openly talk to people who were of similar age. Encounter Groups were led by the members of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM). These are the youth in our Annual Conference who help to plan and create different events (such as ROM) for WV youth. Each Encounter Group leader made a poster board sign with their group name so that youth would know who to find when they were dismissed to their groups. Encounter Groups were each named after different adjectives such as “Great,” “Cool,” “Super,” “Nice,” and “Sweet.” This way, each group is equal and one group is not above another. Each group member was given a corresponding sticker to place on their nametag for the remainder of ROM. Encounter Groups are a simple and effective way of connecting your youth group. Here are some ways to re-create them at home:

- One evening, gather your youth group and split them up by ages. If your youth group isn’t huge, don’t worry about small Encounter Groups. They’ll still be able to connect with each other!
- Assign one person to serve as the group’s leader; this person should also participate in all Encounter Group activities.
- You can either assign group names or have them choose their own name and decorate signs to go along with their group. Just be sure all group names are focused on the same topic (Ex. different colors, stickers, animals, etc.)
- Give them some time to get to just talk and get to know each other to one another when they are first put into groups. Encourage them to start a group chat (group text, GroupMe, etc.) so that they can communicate outside of their in-person time if they need to. (Make sure to include 2 adults in the chat to comply with Safe Sanctuaries.)
- Encourage your youth to invite new people to Encounter Groups!
These are all about building new relationships and making connections!