

## GROUP EXERCISES BEFORE BACKPACKING TRIP

### 1. "Circle of Fears & Excitements"

**Purpose:** To share apprehensions and excitement, normalize feelings, and build empathy.

- Have the group sit in a circle.
- Pass around a small object (like a talking stick).
- Each person, when holding the object, shares one thing they're excited about and one thing they're nervous about regarding the trip.
- After each share, the group can offer supportive words or simply say "thank you for sharing."
- Emphasize that all feelings are valid and common.

### 2. "Trust Web"

**Purpose:** To visually and physically demonstrate the interconnectedness and support within the group.

- Use a ball of yarn.
- One person holds the end, says something they're hoping to get from the group/experience (e.g., "I hope we can encourage each other when things get tough"), then tosses the ball to someone else (while holding onto their end).
- Continue until everyone has had a turn and a web is formed.
- Discuss: "What does this web represent? How can we support each other if someone is struggling?"
- Optionally, gently tug on the web to show how everyone is connected.

### 3. "Backpack Superpowers"

**Purpose:** To help each girl recognize her strengths and how she can contribute to the group.

- Each person writes down (or says aloud) one "superpower" they bring to the group (e.g., "I'm good at making people laugh," "I'm organized," "I know first aid").
- Then, each person shares one thing they hope to learn from someone else.
- Group discussion: How can we use our superpowers to help each other during the trip?

### 4. "Support Pledge"

**Purpose:** To create a group agreement for supporting one another.

- As a group, brainstorm ways to support each other (e.g., "Check in if someone is quiet," "Share snacks," "Encourage each other on tough hikes").
- Write these on a large sheet of paper.
- Each girl signs the pledge.
- Optionally, take a group photo with the pledge to revisit during the trip.

### 5. "Rose, Thorn, Bud"

**Purpose:** To share personal experiences and feelings in a structured, supportive way.

- Each person shares:
  - **Rose:** Something positive in their life or something they're looking forward to on the trip.
  - **Thorn:** Something challenging or a worry they have (about the trip or otherwise).
  - **Bud:** Something they're curious about or hope to experience.
- This can be done in a circle or small groups, with everyone listening respectfully.

### 6. "Personal Map"

**Purpose:** To help girls share more about themselves and find common ground.

- Give each girl a blank sheet of paper and markers.
- Ask them to draw a "map" of their life: important places, people, hobbies, and experiences.
- After 10-15 minutes, have them share their maps in pairs or small groups.
- Discuss: What did you learn about each other? Did you find any surprises or commonalities?

### 7. "Compliment Chain"

**Purpose:** To build self-esteem and positive group energy.

- Sit in a circle.

- One person starts by giving a genuine compliment to the person on their right.
- Continue around the circle until everyone has both given and received a compliment.
- Optionally, repeat with a focus on “What quality do you admire in this person that will help us on our trip?”

## **GROUP EXERCISES DURING BACKPACKING TRIP**

### **1. Daily "Rose, Thorn, Bud" Check-In**

- At the end of each day (around the campfire or during a rest), invite everyone to share:
  - **Rose:** Something good from the day.
  - **Thorn:** Something challenging or tough.
  - **Bud:** Something they’re looking forward to or curious about.
- **Why:** Normalizes sharing struggles and joys and gives space for support.

### **2. "Buddy System" Reflection**

- Pair up girls as “buddies” for the day. At a set time (e.g., after dinner), buddies check in privately:
  - “How are you feeling physically and emotionally?”
  - “Is there anything you need help with?”
- **Why:** Makes it easier to ask for help in a smaller, safer setting.

### **3. "Support Circle"**

- When you notice someone struggling, or at a planned time, gather in a circle. Invite anyone who wants to share a challenge or ask for help to step into the center. The group offers encouragement, advice, or practical help.
- **Why:** Creates a ritual for asking and receiving support.

### **4. "Affirmation Pass"**

- During a break, pass around a small object (like a stone). Each person gives a word of encouragement or appreciation to the person on their left.
- **Why:** Builds positive energy and reminds everyone they’re valued.

### **5. "Silent Walk"**

- For 10-15 minutes, walk together in silence. Afterwards, gather and invite anyone who wants to share a thought, feeling, or observation from the walk.
- **Why:** Sometimes quiet reflection helps girls process and open up.

### **6. "Gratitude Circle"**

- At the end of a tough day, gather and have each person share one thing they’re grateful for and one thing they’d like support with.
- **Why:** Balances positivity with vulnerability.

### **7. "Help Wanted" Signal**

- Teach the group a simple, nonverbal signal (e.g., wearing a bandana on your wrist, or a hand sign) that means “I need support.” Encourage girls to use it if they’re struggling but don’t want to speak up.
- **Why:** Makes asking for help less intimidating.

### **8. "Story Swap"**

- During a rest, invite girls to share a story about a time they overcame a challenge, felt supported, or learned something about themselves.
- **Why:** Builds empathy and normalizes struggle.

## **Tips for Facilitating:**

- Model openness and vulnerability yourself.
- Normalize asking for help (“It’s brave to ask for support!”).
- Remind the group that everyone has tough moments, and that’s okay.
- Keep the tone supportive and nonjudgmental.