

Dear Parents,

With much sadness, I want to let you know that we are canceling the in-person location for the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Bodyworks Retreat March 27-29, 2020. I expect that most of you will not be surprised and will actually feel relieved. I feel sure this is the right call. But, I want to express my sadness and acknowledge your child's (and hopefully yours). This special retreat uniquely meets some of the needs and developmental challenges and joys of this age of life, providing information and reassurance as well as celebration and love for each of them as wonderful, unique human beings.

It's been some inner work for me to come to this decision. Over the years, we've cancelled the Bodyworks Retreat twice. Both groups of kids, now adults, can still go on a roll about how 'cheated' they felt. So, let's have a moment of sadness.

And then, let's pivot, because Maggie and I have a plan!

We hope to leverage the internet and do *parts* of the retreat via Zoom (more on that in a bit) on Friday evening and some of Saturday that weekend. We're thinking about activities like

- a scavenger hunt where they upload photos of listed items
- JHYM check-ins to just talk about life (which we expect to be extensive)
- tours of each other's rooms, pets, etc.
- some content in short blocks of time
- ice cream sundaes (we can make and eat them at the same time)
- worship a little and maybe even sing together

It won't be the same, but if we can get across our love, drill home the point that all questions and calls for help will be answered by the youth staff of NEYM today, next week, and in 5 years... and help them to feel connected to each other despite the distance, we'll have delivered the essence of the retreat's goals.

I am going to need your help – and I am so grateful that I know you're "in" to help make this work.

1. Attached is a letter for your child that you can print out and hand to them or just share on your screen. If you print it out, they can read it more than once, which could be helpful.
2. Please go to this link to a NEW registration for this retreat and let me know what blocks of time would work for your child. It's okay if they can't do all of them! We'll still run it – but it'll help to have a sense of what is possible. The registration will also let you tell me how familiar you are with Zoom, if an internet source is a problem, etc. If you are not familiar with Zoom, do not worry. We have time to do tutorials or problem-solve another way for your child to participate....
3. Look out for the package of handouts and surprises coming in the mail – AND follow the instructions in it. 😊
4. Please keep an eye out for short emails or texts from me asking specific questions and reply.

I hope this feels workable. As always, please be in touch with questions, concerns, and updates on your child that will help us continue to support them. This is a very challenging time, and my thoughts and prayers are with all of you. Keep in touch and take good care of yourselves and each other.

With much love,  
Gretchen Baker-Smith & Maggie Nelson