

Bodyworks, Version 2
March 29-31, 2019 @ Portland Meeting

Dear Parents and Guardians,

For 20 years, JYM and JHYM jointly offered a special retreat for 6th graders entitled Bodyworks. It's been 5 years since the last one, and I am excited to be offering this "version 2" to the 6th and 7th graders in NEYM.

Our goals are to

- Celebrate and honor the amazing (changing) bodies and senses of self of our 6th and 7th graders within our spiritual community as Friends.
- Create a safe and joy-filled sanctuary where they can share thoughts, questions, and feelings about all that is going on within them physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually as well as within the wider culture.
- Provide accurate, age-appropriate information that nurtures and supports their physical, emotional, and spiritual health, encourages healthy relationships, and bolsters their self-respect.
- Deliver the message that they are unique, cherished, and sacred beings, and that self-care and self-respect are spiritual practices.
- Affirm the family members, teachers, and adult friends whom they know they can go to for help if/when they need it, and stress that we are always in their circle – no matter how many years go by.
- Encourage a culture where these conversations happen at other retreats and at Sessions.
- Laugh, play, sing, build friendships and community, eat well, share chores, and get some sleep!

While we have a basic outline of content we hope to touch upon in our large and small group formats, the essence and flow of this retreat looks more like worship sharing or a clearness committee than a classroom lesson plan. We will do a run-through of physiological changes to clear up misinformation and be sure to tenderly and carefully talk about keeping safe, but then we will go where the thoughts, questions, confusions, and hearts lead. We will scatter Question Boxes around the building and answer them throughout the weekend. We plan to offer a range of discussion groups that meet the wide range of development at this age and will keep space for other conversations to happen as Way opens. Though one never knows, topics we anticipate touching upon include shifts in relationships (parents, school friends, those they're attracted to and those they aren't), emotions, sexual attraction, gender identity, body image, pornography, advertising, hopes and dreams, and the confusing world of peers. In and around all of this we will have a lot of fun – like at every JHYM Retreat.

The staff ratio for this retreat increases the availability of us answering questions, listening deeply, and carrying on conversations with individuals or small groups. Our JHYM staff are some of the finest youth workers I know, but those at this retreat are particularly selected for their grounded presence, and their comfort, appropriate humor, and sensitivity talking about these topics. At this time, our roster includes (but is not limited to) Anne Anderson, Dave Baxter, Kevin Lee, and Maggie Nelson who will be assisting with the program and coordinating (hooray!). Kristin Wilson will provide delicious food and love from the kitchen.

While our theme centers on bodily and emotional changes, our experience is that what young people will cherish most in their hearts following this retreat is how they were celebrated and loved -- with their peers – in this beloved community. I hope your child will be able to join us. You can register them at <https://neym.org/jhym/register/form>.

Wishing you joy and Light this day,

Gretchen Baker-Smith, JYM-JHYM Coordinator, 508-997-0940 (home) and 508-287-6441 (cell)