

Anti-anxiety peer bonding exercise- based on sumbel

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Rationale: studies in terror management theory indicate that existential anxiety and self-esteem are linked. Low self-esteem correlates with high anxiety. One way to bolster self-esteem is through peer to peer support, building connections with people around you.

This exercise is based on a largely secular ritual called sumbel that contemporary Heathens participate in. It builds community by helping participants recognize and feel valued for their relational worth. I have a forthcoming article on it titled "How contemporary Heathen sumbel rituals generate ethical relations," and it is featured in a chapter of the book I'm just finishing writing, titled *Wyrd Ecology*.

Have everyone sit in a circle so they can see one another. Historically this activity was done sharing a cup of ale, beer, or mead (wine made from honey) passed from person to person, but it can be done with each person drinking from their own cup that holds water or whatever. It is easier to do this in groups up to thirty, but can be done in groups up to 100, but it takes 2 to 3 hours to let everyone speak with that many people.

As host of the event, explain the activity and make the first toast, hail, or boast. Raise your glass and toast someone present, hail someone who is not there, or boast of some pro-environmental accomplishment. To hail someone is to offer them a toast, and publicly thank them for their contribution to something or praise them for some worthy action. Hails could be to community activists, teachers, profs, or historical figures, etc. When you finish your toast/hail, raise your glass and drink, then shout "Hail!" Everyone shouts back "Hail!" And the next person can speak or pass.

Having the boast option allows people to share their good deeds or accomplishments with the group, which helps the others see their value. Being able to hail others not present helps raise the visibility of actions that might otherwise go unnoticed, which can be good for recognizing contributions to environmental work less well covered in written sources. It might empower students to share information on people others might not yet heard of.

Two or three rounds of opportunities to speak is usually good. In Canada inclusive Heathens like to do this in a free form way, allowing people to choose toast, hail, or boast, but it can be a round of each.

Sumbel often becomes quite emotional and also emotionally freeing.