



# Connection Embers

## *A Letter to Your Older or Younger Self*

**Summary:** Participants write a letter to themselves. Younger participants write a letter to themselves when they are the same age as the older participants, and vice versa.

**Questions/Activities:**

Prompt: Think about different stages of life. How is being seven different from being nine, thirteen, sixteen, twenty-five, thirty-seven, or fifty-two?

Choose a person in the group. Write a letter to yourself as if you were their age. What advice would you give? What would you want to know? How do you think your life would be different at that age? What do you think would be on your mind? What do you think will have or has changed about yourself? What do you hope for?

**Closing:**

If they feel brave enough, invite them to read their letter, or parts of it aloud.

**What would you change next time / what did you learn / how would you enhance it?**

A myriad of variations could be done on this theme: Write a letter to your thirty year old self (what questions do you have? What do you hope has changed about yourself? What do you hope hasn't?) Write a letter to yourself before you started middle school or high school could also be particularly powerful.

## *Wish Circle*

**Summary:** The group discusses their goals and ideas for the next few weeks

**Theme:** Connection & friendship, goals, group harmony

**Age of campers:** This typically works better with older campers because they can usually talk more about themselves at length

**Time allotted/actual:** 30-45 min

**Materials:**

Pens, Markers

Large poster or paper

'Talking Stick', any symbolic object. The person holding it is the only person who can talk.

**Location:** Anywhere. Add candles or low lighting for ambiance.

**Opening/Mood set:** Sit in a circle, holding hands, and talk about how humans naturally wish to share and create meaningful relationships.

**Questions/Activities:** Using the talking stick, each person can talk about a challenge they have and a wish for the week as well as what relationships they hope to develop within the group. Discussions could go with first a story about how it is nice to live wonderful experiences in life, though they often are filled when shared. Then talk about what their experiences of groups and communities have been in the past. What are values of living in groups; what are their challenges? Relationships, human, animal, nature bonds, etc. What are the benefits of creating together, helping each other, and so on? Create a poster to decorate the cabin; with drawings, gluing materials. What are they looking for in the next few weeks?

**Closing:** Create a "wish circle", and we would think of the main things we would like to share together. Write them down on different parts of the poster. If the campers feel like it, cut the wish circles into different pieces, then have each person keep one. The idea is that the whole picture would be complete only if the entire group put their pieces back together.

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## If You Could Live Forever

**Summary:** Campers listen to the Greek myth of Tithonus (The Story of the First Grasshopper) and discuss what it would be like to live a long time, or forever. What would it be like, and how does living forever, or not, effect us?

### Props/Materials/Symbols:

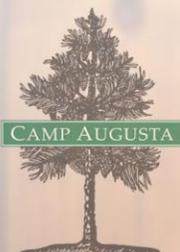
- The Greek myth of Tithonus (see below)
- Candles, lanterns, or fairy lights for atmosphere

### Activity:

- Start by reading the campers the Greek myth of Tithonus—the man who was granted immortality but not eternal youth.
- Evaluate the understandings of the story by simply asking what the story brought up for everyone.
- After that move into the question of whether each person would choose to live forever if they were given the chance. Play devil’s advocate when needed to explore different sides of the idea.
- Allow discussions to organically develop when possible.
- Topics of discussion:
  - Explain that there may one day be technology that will allow people to live much longer than they usually do now. And maybe one day long after that it may be ‘forever’. Would you want to use that kind of technology? Why?
  - What if you lived forever and stayed eternally young?
  - What are the advantages of living forever? What are the advantages of not living forever?
  - The average life expectancy of those living in the US is almost 80 years. Would you live differently if your life expectancy was 160 years? 500 years? (Assume that you are young/middle-aged the entire time)
  - Is there a finite amount of *fun* in the universe? Do you think that you could get bored eventually if you had ‘all the time in the world’?
  - What makes a long life worth living?

### Closing:

- Close with statements about how immortality is something that has been sought for ages, but that we are living in exciting new times.
- Ask the campers how they would like to seize the moment tomorrow, make that commitment then all blow out the candles together.



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## Story for If You Could Live Forever: The Story of the First Grasshopper

In a country that is far away there once lived a young man called Tithonus. He was strong and beautiful. Light of heart and light of foot, he hunted the deer or danced and sang the livelong day. Everyone who saw him loved him, but the one that loved him most was a goddess named Aurora.

Every goddess had her own work, but the work of Aurora was most beautiful of all, for she was the goddess of the morning. It was she who went out to meet the sun and to light up his pathway. She watched over the flowers, and whenever they saw her coming, their colors grew brighter. She loved everything beautiful, and that is why she loved Tithonus.

"Many a year have I roamed through this country," she said to herself, "but never have I seen such bright blue eyes as those. O fairest of youths," she cried, "who are you? Some name should be yours that sounds like the wind in the pine-trees, or like the song of a bird among the first blossoms."

The young man fell upon his knees before her. "I know well," said he, "that you are no maiden of the earth. You are a goddess come down to us from the skies. I am but a hunter, and I roam through the forest looking for deer."

"Come with me, fairest of hunters," said Aurora. "Come with me to the home of my father. You shall live among my brothers and hunt with them, or go with me at the first brightness of the morning to carry light and gladness to the flowers."

So it was that Tithonus went away from his own country and his own home to live in the home of Aurora. For a long time they were happy together, but one day Aurora said, "Tithonus, I am a goddess, and so I am immortal, but some day death will bear you away from me. I will ask the father of the gods that you too may be immortal."

Then Aurora went to the king of the gods and begged that he would make Tithonus immortal. "Sometimes people are not pleased even when I have given them what they ask," replied the king, "so think well before you speak."

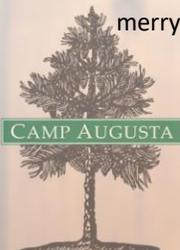
"I have only one wish," said Aurora, "and it is that Tithonus, the fairest of youths, shall be immortal."

"You have your wish," said the king of the gods, and again Tithonus and Aurora roamed happily together through forest and field.

One day Tithonus asked, "My Aurora, why is it that I cannot look straight into your eyes as once I did?" Another day he said, "My Aurora, why is it that I cannot put my hand in yours as once I did?" Then the goddess wept sorrowfully. "The king of the gods gave me what I asked for," she wailed, "and I begged that you should be immortal. I did not remember to ask that you should be always young."

Every day Tithonus grew older and smaller. "I am no longer happy in your father's home," he said, "with your brothers who are as beautiful and as strong as I was when I first saw you. Let me go back to my own country. Let me be a bird or an insect and live in the fields where we first roamed together. Let me go, dearest goddess."

"You shall do as you will," replied Aurora sadly. "You shall be a grasshopper, and whenever I hear the grasshopper's clear, merry song, I shall remember the happy days when we were together."



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