

ALPHA YOUTH MARATHON

Your practical guide to running a concentrated

Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition

GATHER. INVITE. RUN ALPHA. REACH YOUR GENERATION.

A practical field guide for **churches, schools, youth leaders, Alpha Coordinators, Hosts** and **Helpers.**

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1. Welcome to the Alpha Youth Marathon

The Alpha Youth Marathon is a concentrated way of running the Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition. Instead of meeting weekly over a onger period,you bring young people together over a shorter, focused period such as a weekend, holiday programme, camp, retreat, conference or youth gathering.

The goal is simple: create a welcoming space where young people can connect, explore faith, ask honest questions and discover more about Jesus.



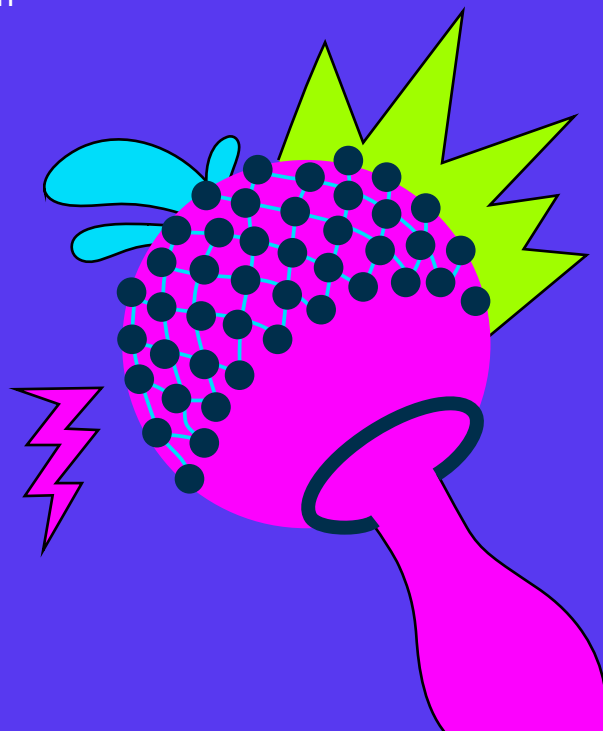
2. What is an Alpha Youth Marathon?

A Marathon is not a different Alpha. It is a different scheduling model. You use the Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition resources, but run them in a concentrated format.

Possible settings include:

Possible settings include:

- Church camps
- Youth or school holidays
- Weekends
- Retreats
- Conferences
- Youth events
- Discipleship weekends
- University or campus gatherings

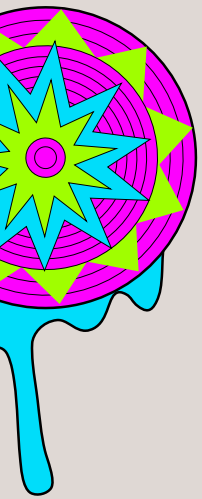


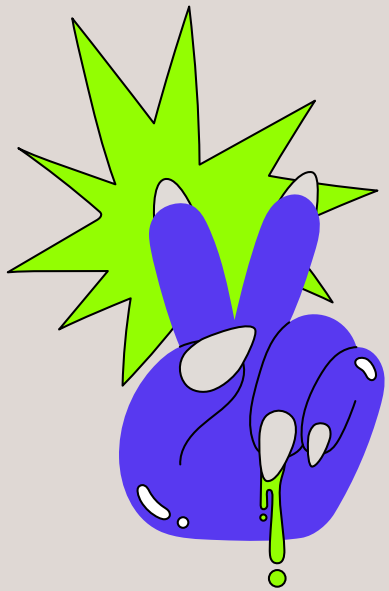
3. Is a Marathon right for you?

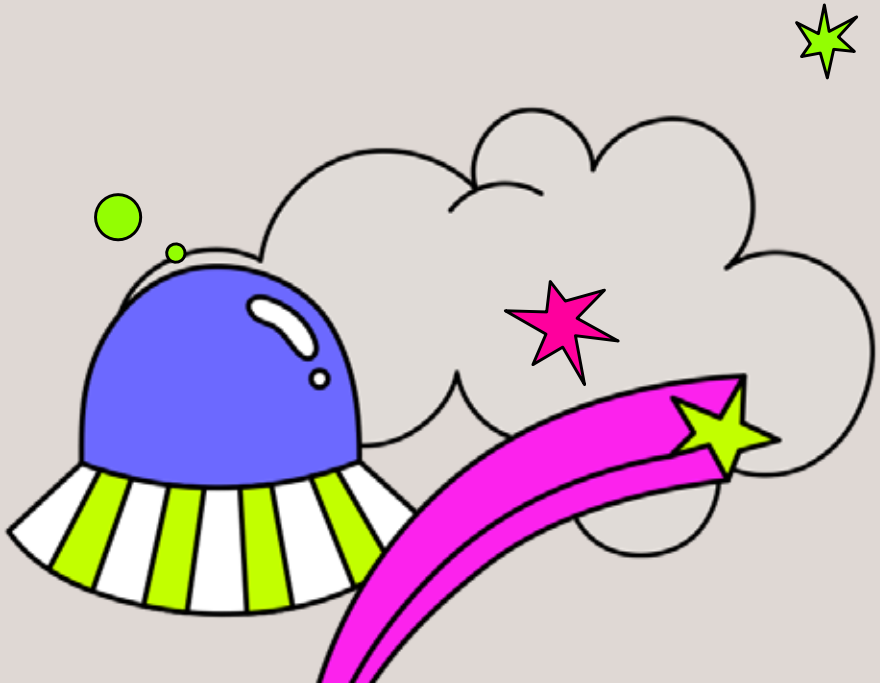
An Alpha Youth Marathon can work well when you already have a group of young people and a clear opportunity to gather them together.

ASK:

- [ ] Do we have a group of young people we can invite? /
- [ ] Do we have a suitable time and place to gather?
- [ ] Do we have enough Hosts and Helpers? / Can we provide hospitality and food?
- [ ] Can we create a safe environment for honest conversation?
- [ ] Are we ready to invite people who may have questions or different beliefs?

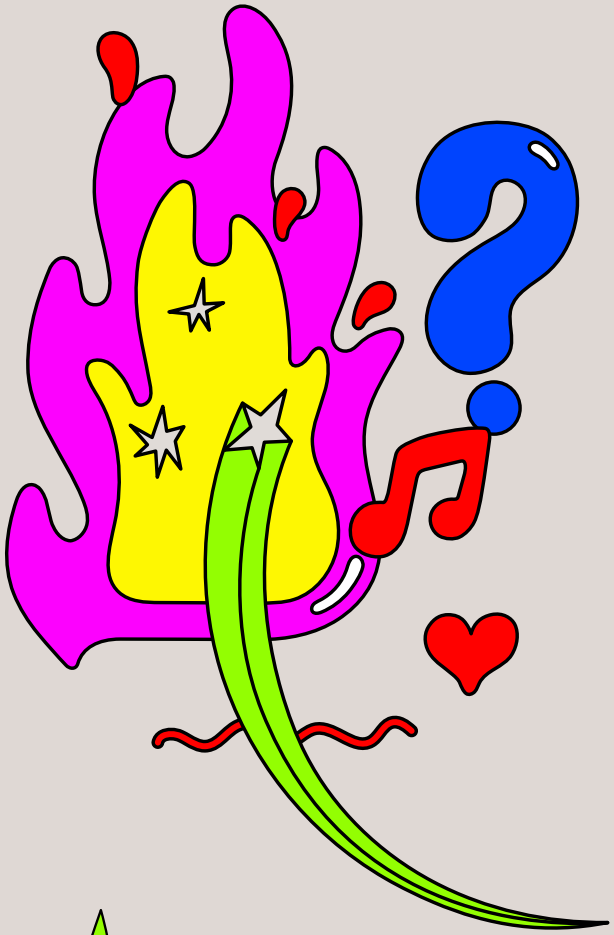






4. Choose your Marathon format

Choose a format that fits your context. Adapt the schedule to your setting while following the Alpha Youth Series sequence and resources provided for your context.



Weekend Marathon

Run Alpha over a Friday, Saturday and/or Sunday, depending on your context.

Camp or Retreat Marathon

Build Alpha into an existing youth camp, church camp, retreat or discipleship gathering.

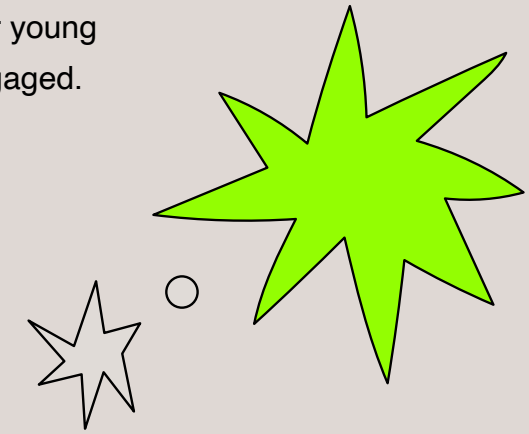
Holiday Marathon

Use a school or university holiday to gather young people over several consecutive days.

Conference or Event Marathon

Use a youth conference or gathering as the setting for a concentrated Alpha experience. Choose a format that makes it easy for young people to attend, connect and stay engaged.





5. Alpha Youth Marathon – Online Option

What if your young people cannot meet in person? You can also run an Alpha Youth Marathon online.

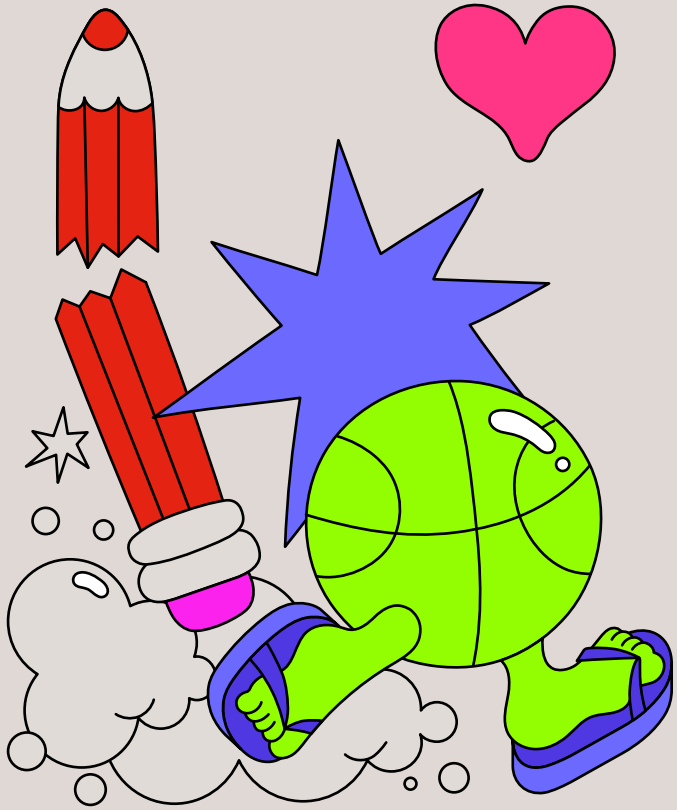
An online Marathon follows the same Alpha rhythm:

CONNECT → WATCH → DISCUSS.

Possible settings include:

- Young people in different cities or countries
- University students who have returned home
- Young people who cannot easily travel to a venue
- School or campus groups
- Youth leaders who want to reach a wider group
- Churches or teams with limited resources for a physical event

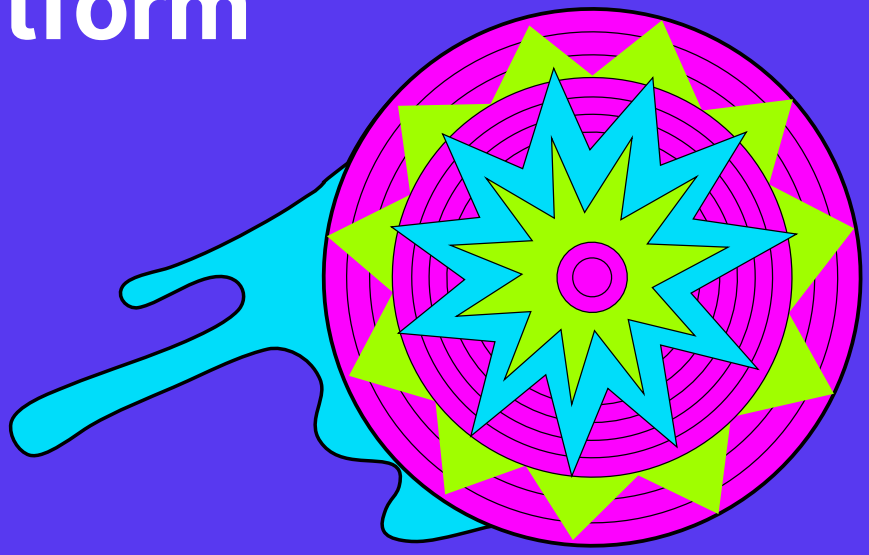




5.1 Choose your online platform

Use a platform that allows your group to see and hear one another and, where possible, to have smaller group conversations.

- Zoom
- Google Meet
- Microsoft Teams
- Another platform your church or organisation already uses



Choose one main platform and make sure your Hosts and Helpersare comfortable using it before the Marathon begins.

5.2 Build your online team

Alpha Coordinator	organises the Marathon, sets the schedule, shares links, prepares the team and tracks attendance and follow-up.
Hosts	welcome young people, help create connection, lead conversations, listen and ask good questions.
Helpers	support technology, welcome participants, support Hosts, help with attendance and watch the chat.
Prayer Team	prays before and during the Marathon for the young people, Hosts and conversations.

5.3 Prepare the online space

- [ ] Create one meeting link
- [ ] Decide who will share their screen
- [ ] Prepare discussion questions
- [ ] Share the meeting link and schedule clearly
- [ ] Have a backup plan if technology fails
- [ ] Test the link and platform
- [ ] Test internet connection
- [ ] Decide how breakout rooms will work, if using them
- [ ] Share the meeting link and schedule clearly
- [ ] Test video and sound
- [ ] Make sure the Alpha pisodes play properly

Don't wait until the first session to test everything. Have a short team practice beforehand.

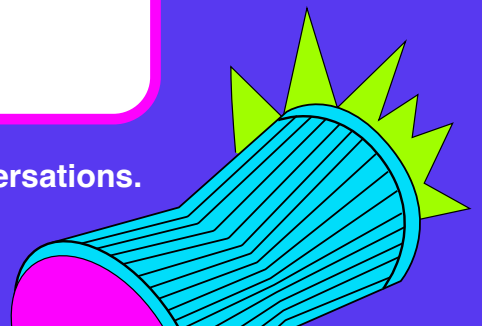


5.4 Create connection online

Online Alpha can still feel personal. Start with simple ways to help people connect:

- Ask a fun question as everyone joins
- Use the chat
- Have a short icebreaker
- Give people a chance to introduce themselves
- Use breakout rooms for smaller conversations
- Encourage cameras where appropriate, while recognising that not everyone will be able to use one

The goal is to help young people feel seen, welcomed and comfortable enough to have honest conversations.



5.5 Run the online Alpha Marathon

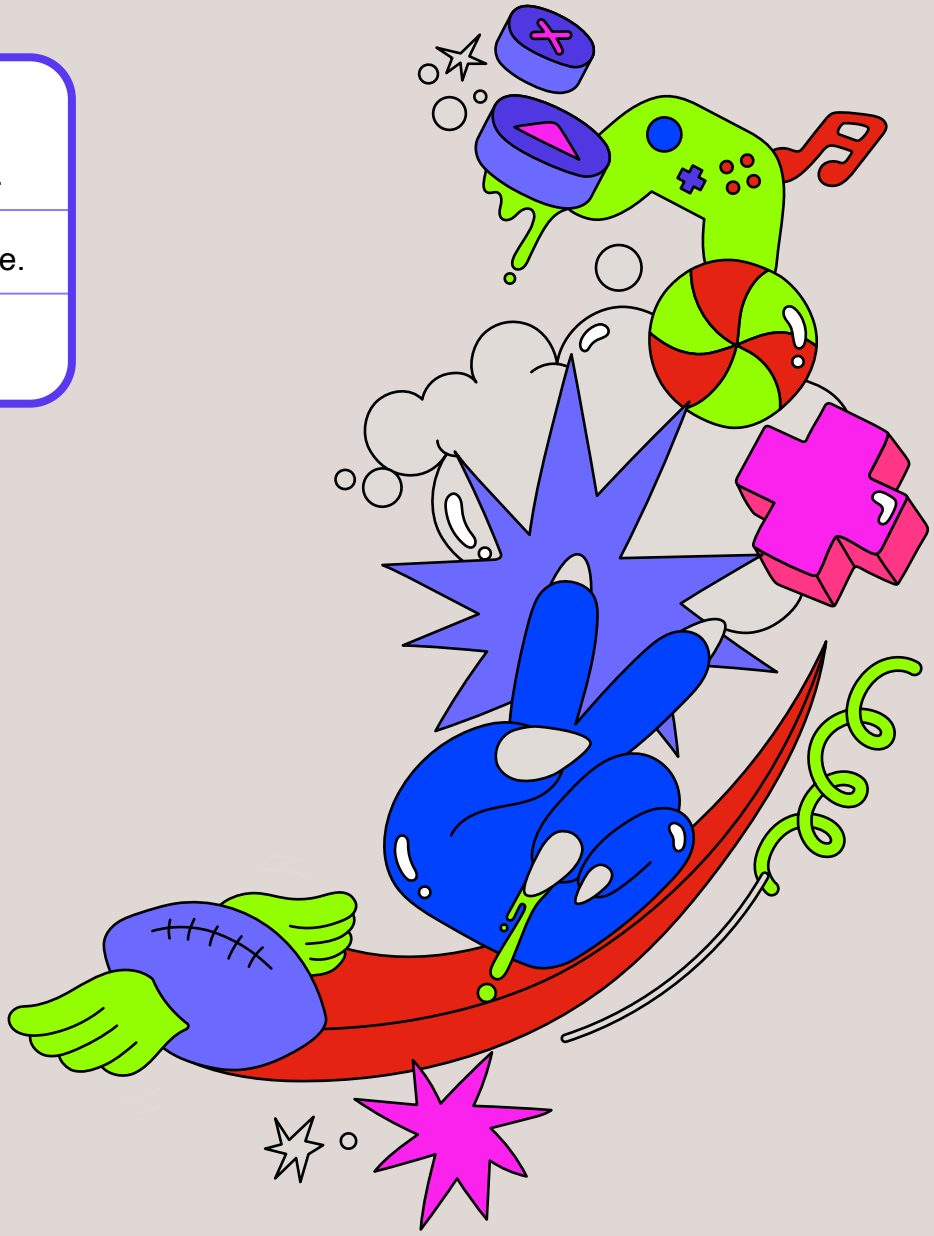
Keep the same basic rhythm:

CONNECT	Welcome everyone. Create connection. Have fun.
WATCH	Play the Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition episode.
DISCUSS	Move into conversation.

Ask questions such as:

- What stood out to you?
- What did you think?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Was there anything you agreed or disagreed with?
- What questions did this raise for you?
- How does this connect with your own life?

If possible, use smaller breakout groups for discussion. Smaller groups oftenmake it easier for young people To speak openly.



5.6 Online conversation guidelines

Use a platform that allows your group to see and hear one another and, where possible, to have smaller group conversations.

- Everyone is welcome.
- Everyone's opinion matters.
- Nobody has to speak.
- Nobody has to speak.

Remind participants that Alpha is a place where they can ask questions and explore faith honestly.

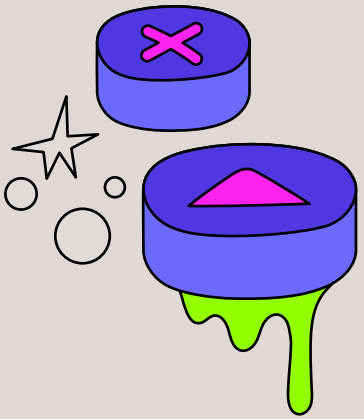


5.7 Keep people connected between sessions

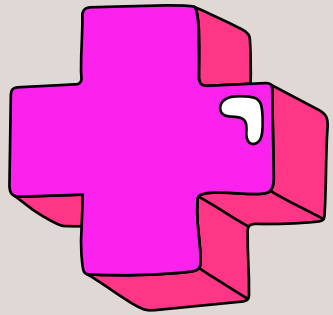
If your Marathon takes place over several days, use a simple communicatio channel such as WhatsApp to:

- Send reminders
- Encourage participants
- Communicate schedule changes
- Share the meeting link
- Celebrate attendance

Keep communication simple. Don't overwhelm people with messages.

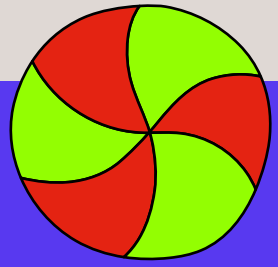


5.8 Online safeguarding



- [ ] Follow your organisation's safeguarding policy.
- [ ] Ensure appropriate adult supervision is in place.
- [ ] Make sure Hosts and Helpers understand their responsibilities.
- [ ] Know who to contact if a safeguarding concern arises.
- [ ] Tell participants how to report a concern.
- [ ] Handle personal information appropriately.
- [ ] Use breakout rooms responsibly.

If a young person shares something serious: listen, stay calm, don't promise secrecy, and follow your organisation's safeguarding procedure.



5.9 If the technology fails

TOP TIP

Don't panic!

Have a simple backup ***plan.***

- If the video stops: rejoin, resend the link and reconnect.
- If the episode will not play: have the episode ready on another device and a second person prepared to share.
- Where possible, have a backup internet connection.

The technology serves the conversation. The conversation is the important part.

5.8 Online safeguarding

- [ ] Follow your organisation's safeguarding policy.
- [ ] Ensure appropriate adult supervision is in place.
- [ ] Use breakout rooms responsibly.
- [ ] Know who to contact if a safeguarding concern arises.
- [ ] Tell participants how to report a concern.
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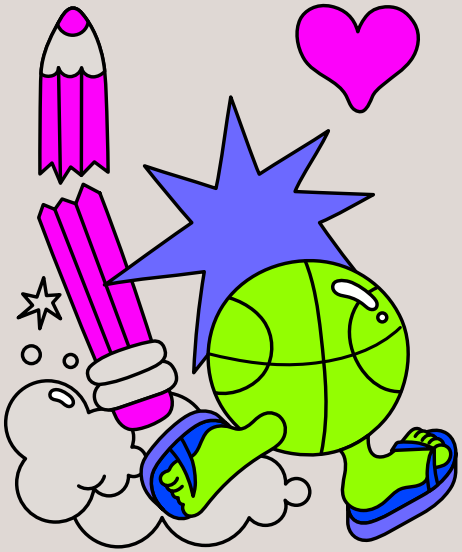




6. Build your Alpha team

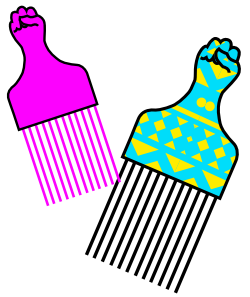
You do not have to run a Marathon alone.

Alpha Coordinator

- Organises the Marathon
- Coordinates the team
- Keeps the schedule on track
- Makes sure resources are ready
- Tracks attendance and follow-up

HOSTS

- Welcome young people
- Help create connection
- Lead conversations
- Listen well
- Ask good questions
- Create a welcoming, non-judgmental environment



HELPERS

- Welcome guests
- Support Hosts
- Help with food and practical needs
- Support technology
- Help with attendance and follow-up

PRAYER TEAM

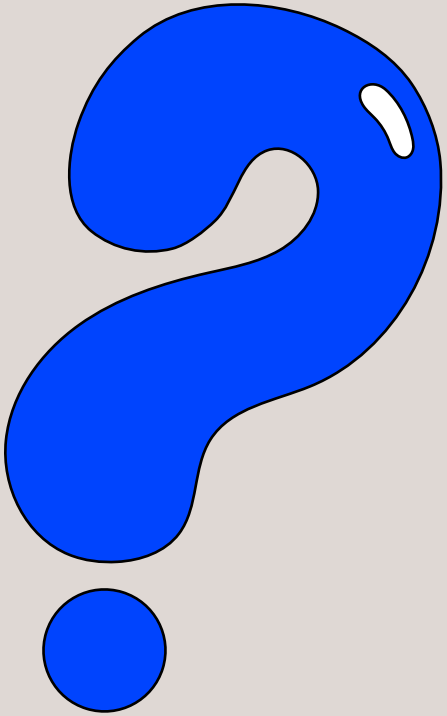
- Pray for the team
- Pray for the young people
- Pray for the conversations
- Pray for openness to Jesus



You don't need to have all the answers. You need to be willing to listen, ask questions and create space for conversation.

7. Choose your young people

Think about who you want to reach. Your Marathon can include friends, church youth, school or campus groups, young eaders, or young people who are exploring faith.
Start with people you already know, then encourage every participant to invite someone else.



8. Choose your dates and venue

Choose dates that make it easy for your young people to attend and stay for the whole experience.

- ☐ Dates and times
- ☐ Venue availability
- ☐ Seating
- ☐ Food and hospitality
- ☐ Electricity
- ☐ Toilets
- ☐ Safe access
- ☐ Discussion space
- ☐ Screen and sound
- ☐ Safeguarding arrangements

9. Register your Alpha and get your resources

Register your Alpha through the appropriate Alpha process so your team can access the resources, training and materials needed to run Alpha.

Use the official Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition resources and follow the sequence provided for your context.

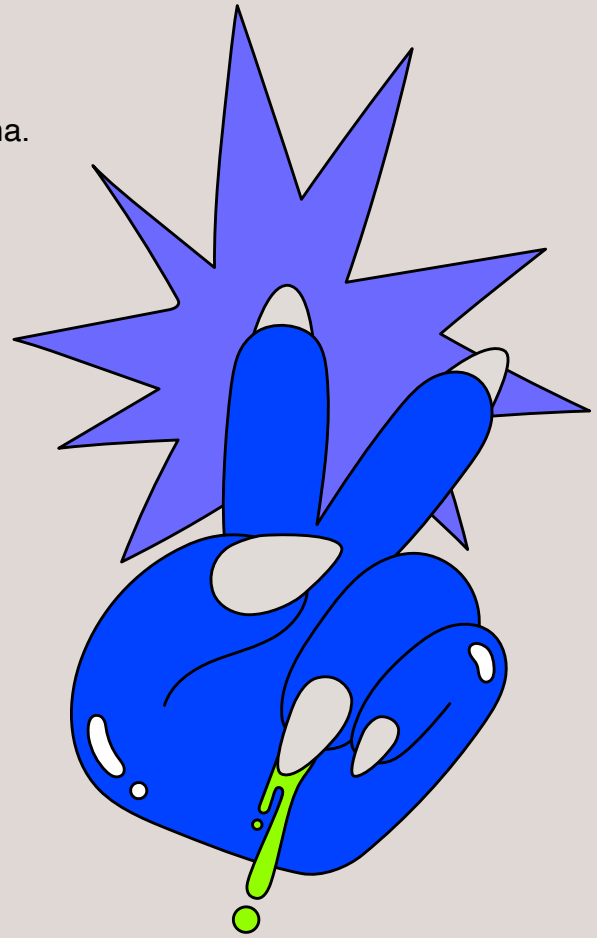


10. Prepare your team

Before the Marathon, gather your team and make sure everyone understands the purpose of Alpha.

Your team should be:

- Welcoming
- Patient
- Curious
- Good listeners
- Non-judgmental
- Ready for honest questions



Practice your schedule, roles, transitions and technology before the first gathering.

11. Invite young people

The best invitation is personal and simple.

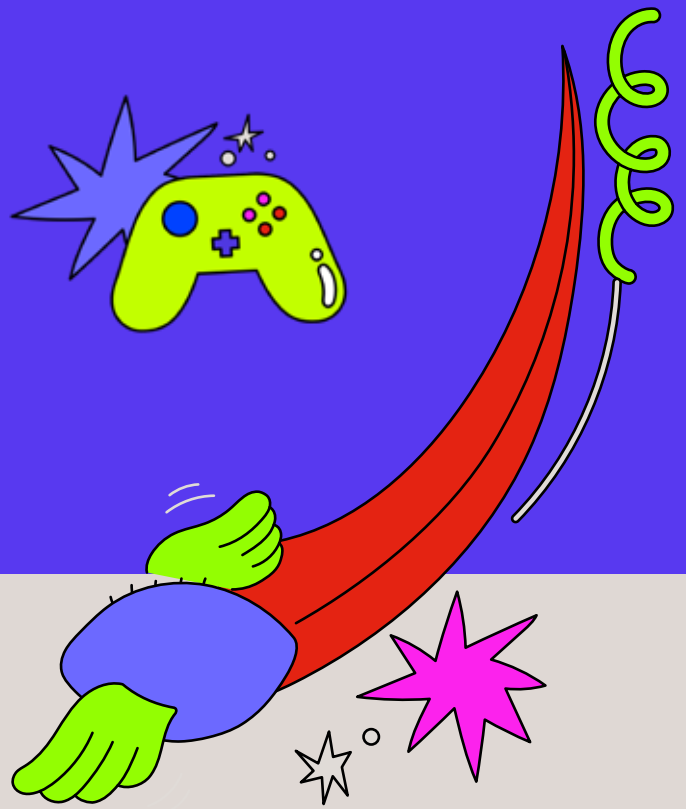
> **Hey! We're running an Alpha Youth Marathon. It's a space where we'll connect, watch some episodes and have real conversations about life, faith and Jesus. You don't have to believe anything or have all the answers. Come as you are. I'd love you to join us."**

Encourage every Host, Helper and young person to invite someone.

12. Prepare the space

Create a space that feels welcoming, relaxed and ready for conversation.

- [ ] Welcome/sign-in point
- [ ] Comfortable seating
- [ ] Food and drinks
- [ ] Screen/projector
- [ ] Good internet if needed
- [ ] Discussion areas
- [ ] Toilets
- [ ] Safeguarding information
- [ ] Sound
- [ ] Power
- [ ] Emergency contacts



13. Run your Alpha Marathon

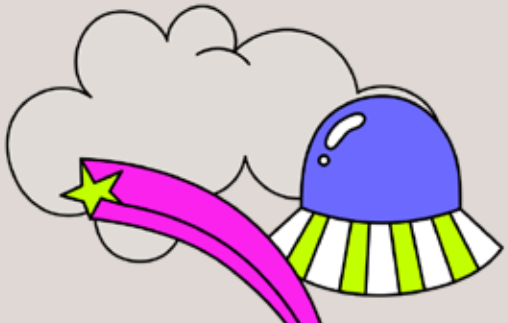
Keep the rhythm simple:

CONNECT:

Welcome people. Eat together. Play a game. Help people relax and connect.

WATCH:

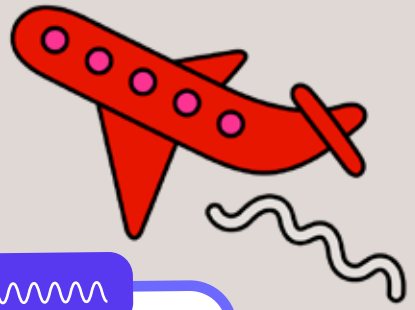
Play the **Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition** episode.



DISCUSS:

Give young people space to talk about what they have just watched. Do not re-teach the episode. Your role is to help people have a conversation.

14. Prepare your team



Good Hosts do not need perfect answers. They create space for people to think, question and speak honestly.

Helpful questions:

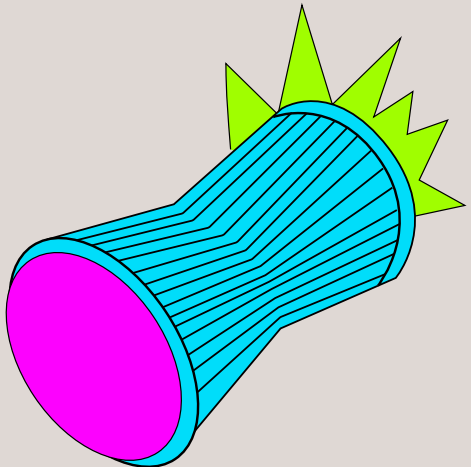
- What stood out to you?
- What did you think?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What did you agree or disagree with?
- What questions did this raise for you?
- How does this connect with your own life?

Conversation guidelines:

- Everyone is welcome.
- Nobody has to speak.
- Listen to one another.
- Respect different opinions.
- Don't dominate the conversation.
- Don't pressure anyone to agree.

Never pressure anyone to pray, share or respond in a particular way.

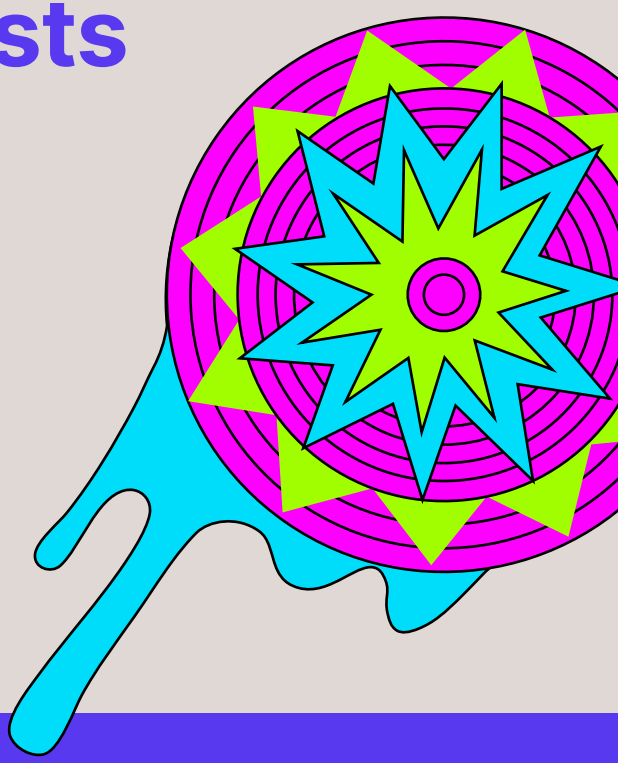






15. Prayer and caring for your guests

Pray before the Marathon, during the Marathon and afterwards.



Conversation guidelines:

- Pray for the Hosts and Helpers.
- Pray for every young person who attends.
- Pray for honest and meaningful conversations.
- Pray for openness to Jesus.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment.

Never pressure anyone to pray, share or respond in a particular way.

16. Safeguarding and creating a safe space

Every Marathon should be run in line with your church or organisation's safeguarding policy.

- [ ] Adult supervision is in place where required.
- [ ] The safeguarding lead is known to the team.
- [ ] Emergency procedures are known.
- [ ] Hosts and Helpers understand appropriate boundaries.
- [ ] Required parent/guardian permissions are obtained where applicable.
- [ ] The team knows how to respond to a safeguarding concern.

If a young person shares something serious: listen, stay calm, don't promise secrecy, and follow the appropriate safeguarding procedure.

17. Troubleshooting

Pray before the Marathon, during the Marathon and afterwards.

No one is talking

Give people time. Ask an easy, open question. Use pairs or smaller groups before returning to the larger group.

Someone asks a difficult question

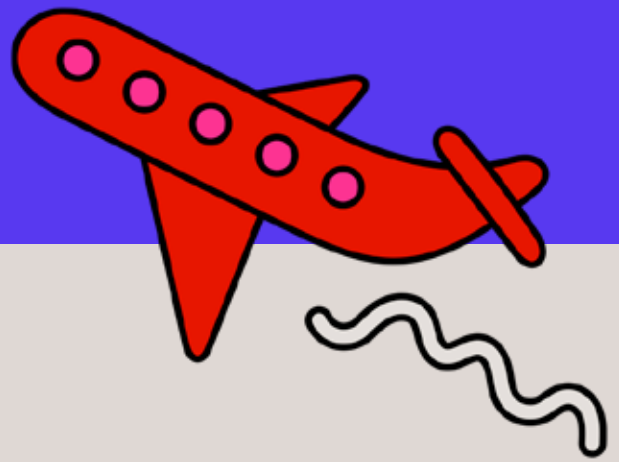
You don't need to have every answer. Be honest. Explorethe question together and if needed, offer to find out more.

Technology fails

Stay calm. Have a backup plan, a second device and someone who can help with technology.

People disagree

Don't shut down healthy disagreement. Remind everyone to listen and respect one another.



18. Finish well

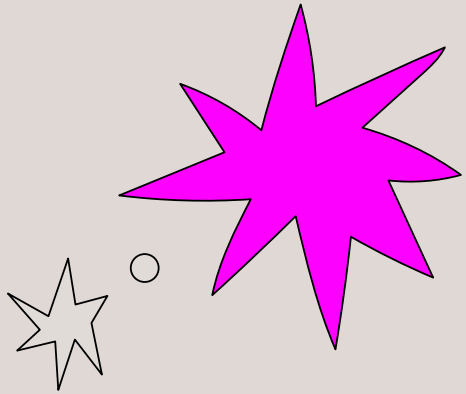
Take time to celebrate what God has done and what the young people have experienced.

- [ ] Thank your Hosts and Helpers.
- [ ] Celebrate the young people who came.
- [ ] Ask what they enjoyed.
- [ ] Ask what surprised them.
- [ ] Collect stories and feedback.
- [ ] Celebrate the team.
- [ ] Ask what they learned or discovered.

19. What happens after the Marathon?

Don't let Alpha end with the final session.

- Invite young people to become Hosts.
- Invite young people to become Helpers.
- Encourage them to invite friends to the next Alpha.
- Identify potential Alpha Champions.
- Plan the next Alpha.



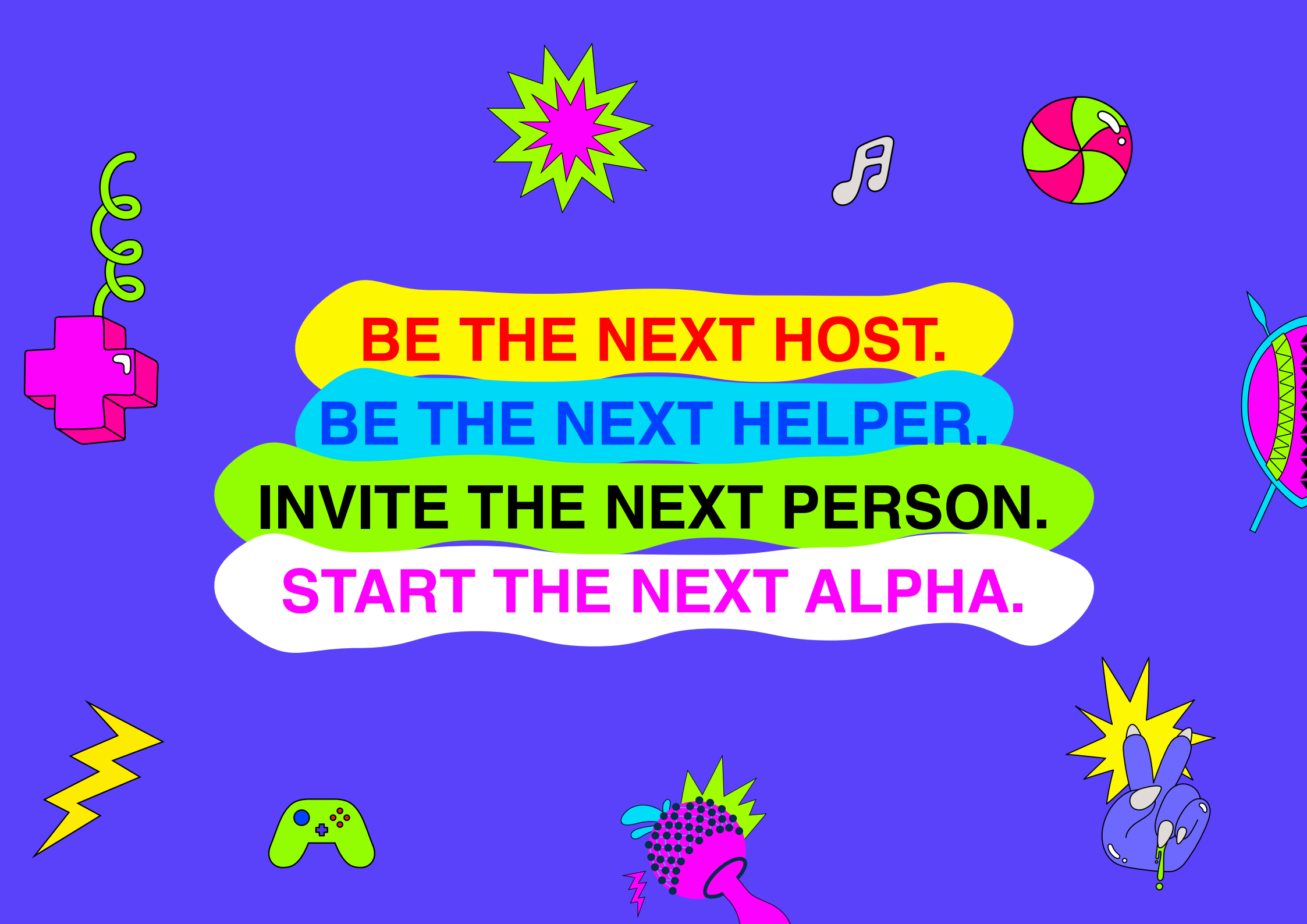
The end of one Alpha should become the beginning of the next.

20. Become an Alpha Champion

An Alpha Champion is someone who helps make Alpha happen.

- Run Alpha.
- Host.
- Help.
- Invite friends.
- Organise the next Alpha.
- Encourage other leaders.
- Pray for Alpha and the young people being reached.




BE THE NEXT HOST.
BE THE NEXT HELPER.
INVITE THE NEXT PERSON.
START THE NEXT ALPHA.

21. Marathon checklis



4–6 weeks before

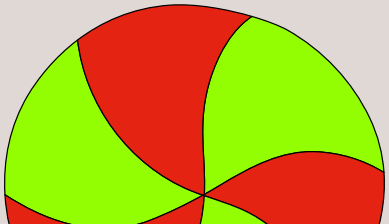
- [ ] Choose your format
- [ ] Choose dates and venue
- [ ] Choose your target group
- [ ] Appoint Alpha Coordinator
- [ ] Recruit Hosts and Helpers
- [ ] Register Alpha
- [ ] Plan hospitality/food
- [ ] Begin invitations
- [ ] Confirm safeguarding arrangements

1–2 weeks before

- [ ] Confirm attendance
- [ ] Follow up invitations
- [ ] Train/practice with team
- [ ] Test technology
- [ ] Prepare venue
- [ ] Prepare food/hospitality
- [ ] Confirm emergency contacts
- [ ] Prepare registration and attendance

Day before

- [ ] Confirm team
- [ ] Confirm venue
- [ ] Check equipment
- [ ] Prepare resources
- [ ] Send reminder
- [ ] Pray together

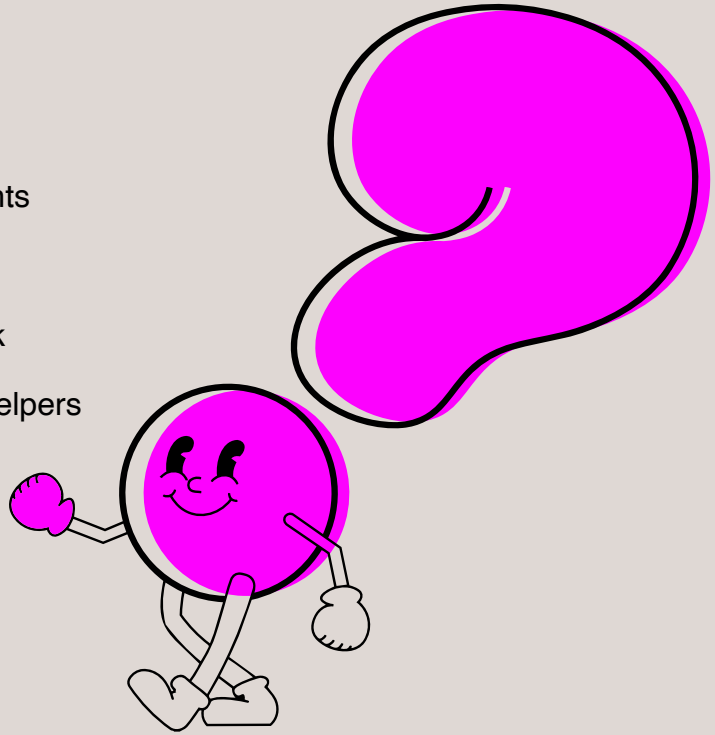


During

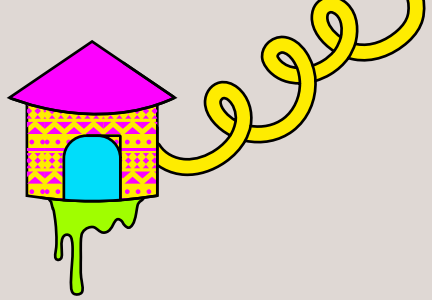
- [ ] Welcome
- [ ] Connect
- [ ] Watch
- [ ] Discuss
- [ ] Pray
- [ ] Track attendance
- [ ] Care for guests
- [ ] Capture stories

After

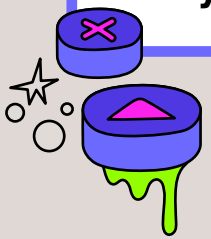
- [ ] Thank participants
- [ ] Follow up
- [ ] Gather feedback
- [ ] Identify Hosts/Helpers
- [ ] Debrief team
- [ ] Plan next Alpha



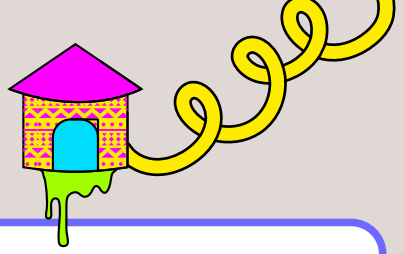
22. One-page Marathon Planner



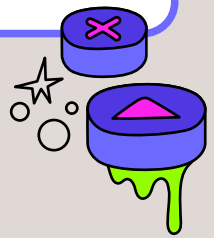
Church / Organisation:	
Alpha Coordinator:	
Marathon format:	
Dates:	
Venue / Online platform:	
Expected young people:	
Hosts:	
Helpers:	
Prayer Team:	







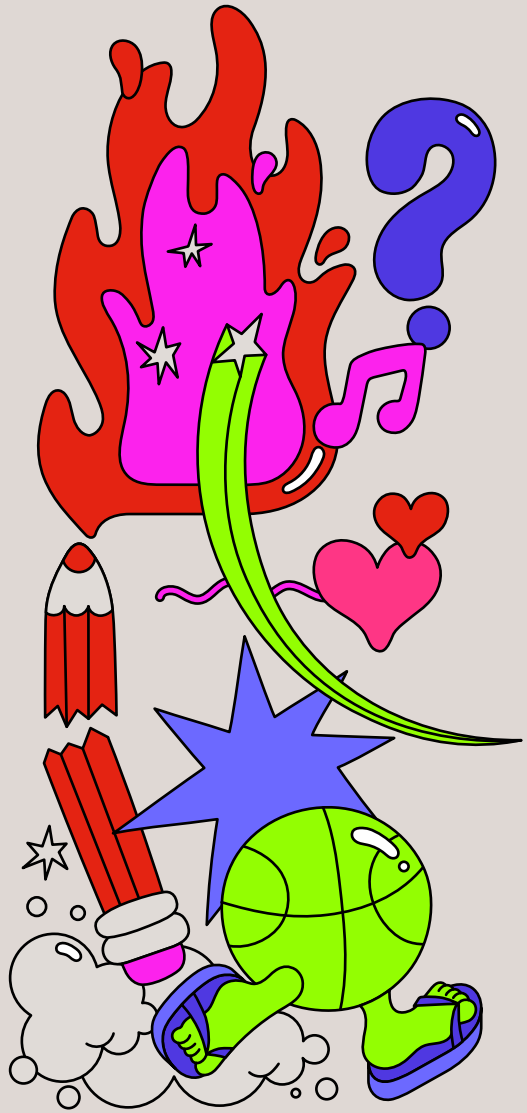
Food / Hospitality:	
Technology:	
Invitation plan:	
Safeguarding lead:	
Emergency contact:	
Attendance target:	
Invitation target:	
Desired outcomes:	
Next Alpha date:	
Potential Hosts / Helpers:	



23. Attendance & follow-up tracker

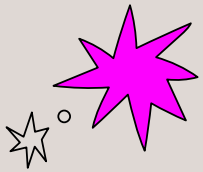
Use this to track attendance and follow-up throughout the Marathon.

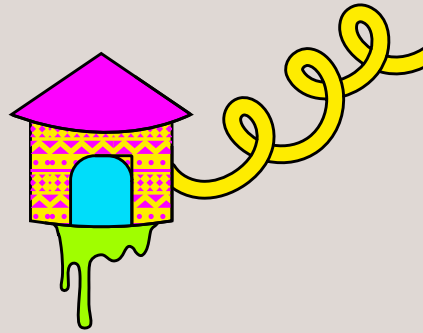
Name	Contact	S1	S2	S3	Follow-up



24. Team debrief

Take 20–30 minutes with your team after the Marathon.





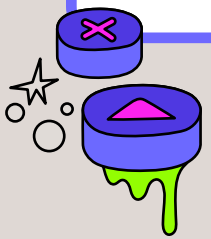
What went well?

What was challenging?

What did we learn?

What did we notice about the young people?

What stories should we celebrate?





Who could become a Host or Helper?

_____

_____

What should we do differently next time?

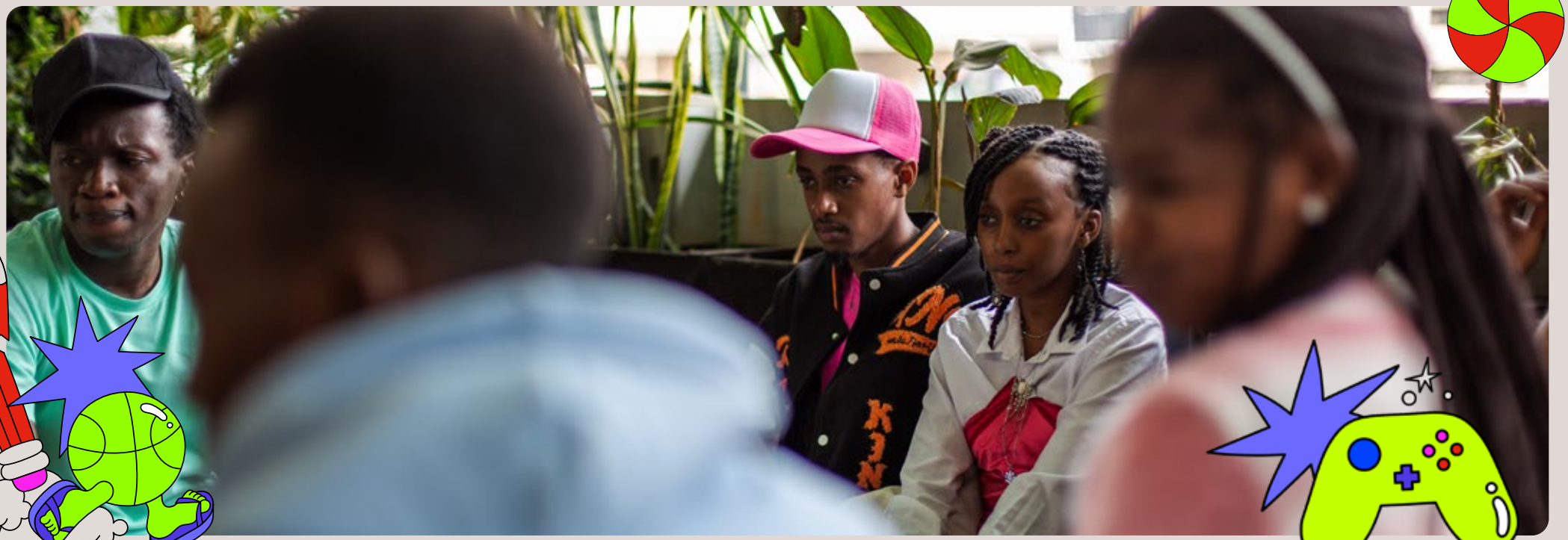
_____

_____

When will we run the next Alpha?

_____

_____



25. Celebration and stories

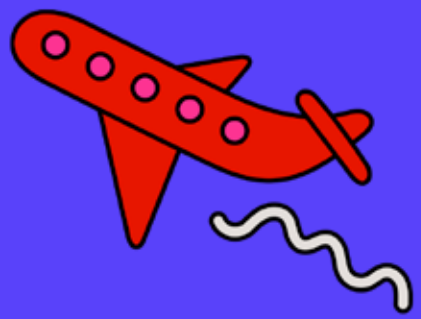
Stories help us celebrate what God is doing and encourage others to run Alpha.

Ask participants and team members:

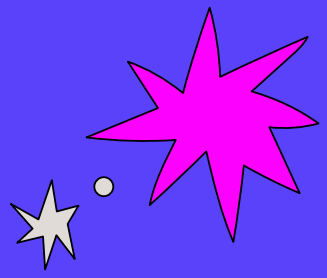
- What did you enjoy most?
- Was there a conversation that stayed with you?
- What surprised you?
- Would you invite a friend to Alpha? Why?
- Did Alpha change the way you think about faith?

Always follow your organisation's guidance and obtain appropriate permission before sharing someone's story, photo or personal information.









GATHER. INVITE.

RUN ALPHA.

REACH YOUR GENERATION.





Alpha Youth Marathon

Alpha Youth Series: Africa Edition