

## Canoe Listen: a ritual duet for the lake

This is a 30-60 minute canoe journey for you and someone you would like to know better. There are three parts: first on the shore, then on the water, and then back on the shore. You complete the experience by following the instructions.

You will need:

- Two paddlers
- A calm, quiet body of water (e.g. Tofte Lake on a not-too-breezy afternoon)
- A canoe and accoutrements (life jackets, paddles, etc.)
- Two small containers, one for each of you, like a pocket, fanny pack, or small box where you can keep a few things easily accessible during your journey. Each should contain the following:
  - o three leaves or twigs that will float
  - o a cool-looking small rock
  - o a slip of paper
  - o a pen or pencil
  - o twine, a rubber band or, in a pinch, a long, flexible plant stem
- A printout of these instructions

Before you begin:

- Decide who will be Bow and paddle in the front of the canoe, and who will be Stern and paddle in the back of the canoe.
- Starting with Part I, each person will read aloud the words that follow their role (Bow or Stern). Do what the instructions say as they say them. (*Anything in italics doesn't need to be read out loud.*)
- Keep in mind you can converse as you like during this journey; you do not need to say only what's indicated in the text. This time is for you.
- Paddling tips:
  - o You'll need to read instructions and use some of your supplies while in the canoe, so keep them handy.
  - o You may want to put these instructions at your feet in the canoe so you can see them while you paddle but they won't blow away.
  - o If you're new to canoeing, maybe take some time in between Part I and Part II to get used to paddling together.
  - o Pause in your actions as needed to deal with any safety issues or discussions about where and how to paddle with your partner.

## Part I: On the shore

*Gather on the shore with your canoe and your supplies.*

Bow: We gather together for a journey.

Stern: We stand one paddle length apart and look at each other.

Bow: We say hello.

*Say hello.*

Stern: We examine our supplies

*Inside each participant's container is a handful of leaves.*

Bow: I give these leaves to you and take yours in exchange. We'll need these later.

*Put the leaves in your pocket or bag to take with you. Take out the rock.*

Stern: Here's the rock I've chosen. (*Show the rock.*)

Bow: And here's mine. (*Show your rock, too.*) We'll take care of them during this journey.

*Put the rock back in your own pocket or bag.*

Stern: Now we go out on the water.

*Launch the canoe together. When you are on the water and away from the shore, begin Part II.*

## Part II: On the water

Bow: I pick out a calm, quiet place to go. (*Point out the place.*)

Stern: I'll help us reach the place you've chosen.

Bow: While we travel, we observe our surroundings.

Stern: We take turns sharing what we observe: things we see, hear, and smell.

*Paddle. Share your observations while you do.*

Bow: We've made it to the right place.

Stern: In a moment, I'll ask you a question from the list of questions on this page.

Bow: We'll paddle onward while I answer.

*Stern asks Bow a question from the list. Bow answers while you both paddle.*

Stern: When your answer is finished, we pause in our journey.

Bow: Take one of the leaves I gave you. Release it into the water.

Stern: We watch until it is left behind.

Bow: In a moment, it will be my turn to ask a question.

Stern: We'll paddle onward while I answer.

*Bow asks Stern a question from the list. Stern answers while you both paddle.*

Bow: When your answer is finished, we pause in our journey.

Stern: Take one of the leaves I gave you. Release it into the water.

Bow: We watch until it is left behind.

*Repeat the sequence twice more for both of you: Ask a question >>> Answer it >>> The asker releases a leaf. You will each ask and answer a total of three questions.*

Bow: We've released all the leaves we gave each other.

Bow: It's time to return to shore.

Stern: On the way back, we paddle quietly for a bit. We'll use this time to think about a wish for the other person.

Bow: This is something you hope for them or perhaps something you want the universe to bring them. We'll think about, and we'll keep it to ourselves for now.

Stern: When we've had a chance to think, then we might talk however we want, maybe about something that came up before, or maybe asking a question that wasn't on the list.

*Head back to shore and land the canoe. When you're back on shore, begin Part III.*

### Questions

- What's different about being on the lake compared to your usual life?
- What was a time when you needed help but didn't get it?
- When and where do you feel most like yourself?
- What can't you do by yourself?
- Tell me about a time you felt alone.
- Who do you wish you talked to more?
- How do you behave differently when you're alone compared to when you're with others?
- Tell me about a person who's been kind to you.
- What does alone time mean to you?
- How would you like to be taken care of?

### Part III: Back on shore

Bow: When we reach the shore and leave the canoe, we get out our paper and pens.

*Retrieve the slip of paper and writing utensil from your container.*

Stern: We each write our wish for our partner on this paper.

*Write your wish for your partner on the paper.*

Bow: When we're finished writing, we take out the rock we've carried with us throughout this journey.

Stern: We wrap the message around the rock face-down so it can't be read.

*Fold the message to a convenient size. Use the twine to secure the message to the rock.*

Bow: When we have the message secured to the rock, we face each other on the shore.

Stern: Thank you for listening. *(Hand your rock and its message to Bow.)*

Bow: Thank you for listening. *(Hand your rock and its message to Stern.)*

Stern: We will look at these messages tomorrow around this time, or whenever we need them most.

Bow: For now, we put them away.

Stern: To end this journey, we each hold up one hand.

Bow: I put my palm against your palm.

Stern: We breathe in together, then out together.

*Breathe.*

*The End*

*Canoe Listen* was written by Margo Gray in June 2021 as part of a residency at the Tofte Lake Center. Learn more about Margo's work at [margogray.com](http://margogray.com)