

VOLUNTEER REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

An important component of any volunteer or service-learning project is reflection. Reflection activities provide students with the opportunity to think back on the service they have done, think of the ways it has benefitted themselves and the community and brainstorms what future actions they can take.

At the conclusion of your Make A Difference Day project we encourage you to spend a few minutes with your students reflecting on their experiences. Below are some sample questions and activities.

Reflection Questions

- Describe what you did during this project.
- Name the skills you used during this project.
- Explain what you liked about the project.
- How have you made a difference in the community?
- How has this project changed the way you will act or think in the future?
- What needs did this project help fill? How?
- If you were to do this project again, how would you do it differently?
- Describe what you learned during this project.
- What's next? How can you continue your involvement with this group or social issue?

Reflection Activities

Role Taking

Students can assume different roles during the reflection session and look back on the experience through different eyes. For example, planting seedlings as a service project, students can reflect their perception of what the seedling has gone through, and what will happen to it. Students can describe what happened through the imagined perception of one of their classmates, or even the teacher. The point of this exercise is to help students view the experience from a new perspective, in the expectation that new meanings will emerge.

Journal Entries

Journal writing can be incorporated as a long-term project or used just once after an experience. You can advise students that you will give them the chance to share parts of their written responses. Journal entries are helpful in drawing out students who may need more time to formulate a response to your questions before raising their hand in class. Journal entries can be structured or unstructured. Some ways to structure are to provide sentence stems to complete:

- One question I have now is...
- The strongest feeling during the activity was...
- The most important learning that I gained was...
- I was most impacted by...

Peer Leadership

Before the activity, ask for volunteers from among the students to observe the activity and then lead the reflection session. Ask them to observe and identify key issues and topics to reflect upon afterward. Provide volunteers some planning time to reorganize their reflection strategy before asking them to lead. You might also ask the whole group to take ownership of the reflection sessions and determine how issues such as social, political, economic, etc. could be incorporated into reflection.

Diagramming and Drawing

After an activity, ask the students to draw a picture that best represents their perceptions of the way the group interacted, feelings they felt, things they learned, what they found most interesting, most touching, most funny... Tailor the question to the issue you'd like to address, i.e., social, economic, political, personal.

Quotation Responses

After the experience, the facilitator can read one or more quotes to the group and ask them to relate them to what happened during the activity. Another variation is to write separate quotations on pieces of paper and have members draw one. Ask them to reflect upon the quotation. Do they agree or disagree with it? If they agree, how does it relate to their experience? Allow members to read their quotations and share their thoughts.

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

-Theodore (Dr. Suess) Geisel, *The Lorax*

“What matters is that you are not cruel or wasteful; that you don’t keep the truth from those who need it, suppress someone’s will or talent, take more than you need from nature, or fail to use your own talent and will.”

-Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebel Lions*

Adapted from [Lasting Lessons: A Teacher’s Guide to Reflecting on Experience](#). Clifford E. Knapp, and [Group Counseling Strategies and Skills](#), by Jacobs, Harvill and Masson.

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