

REFLECTION QUESTION FORMAT

WHAT

(descriptive)

What surprised you about the experience?

Describe the people, the location, your interactions, etc.

Describe an event/person that stands out in your mind.

SO WHAT

(interpretive; meaning, feelings; why?)

How was your service addressing the social issue?

What did you learn from the experience? (or How were you different when you left than when you entered?)

How are you similar/different from people with whom you interacted?

How did the experience challenge your assumptions/expectations?

NOW WHAT?

(applicative; big picture; action)

What policies/laws impact this issue?

What else could be done to address the issue(s) (by individual, group, agency, society?)

How can the experience apply to other aspects of life?

What are the root causes of this issue?

Where do we go from here? What's the next step?

A SAMPLING of REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

REFLECTION STARTERS (alternatives to simple discussion or journaling)

- Quotes
- Artifact/object
- Critical incident
- Pop culture, media, or scholarly article (esp. controversial)
- Safe Questions - written down, put in hat, each person reads one
- Symbolic or meaningful place (conduct reflection there)
- One word (offered in turn)
- Drawing (or other art)
- Email prompts

SENTENCE STEMS

Sentence Stems can help participants begin to think about their expectations before the experience, or their perceptions after concluding the experience. The facilitator provides the stem and the participants finish it. *For example:*

- "Today I hope..."
- "I am most anxious/uncertain about..."
- "I was most surprised by..."

PAIR & SHARE

Students pair with one or two others to discuss a specific topic. This encourages participation from individuals who are not comfortable addressing the larger group.

Variation: 2,4,8: After students respond to a question/statement in pairs, have pairs combine to form a foursome. They can share answers from the previous pairing and/or respond to a new issue. Then the foursomes join another, creating groups of eight. The process is repeated. This is one way to enact "What? So What? Now What?" with each group responding at a higher level of thinking.

FREE ASSOCIATIONS

This simple technique quickly draws on and captures the true expertise of the group. The facilitator simply asks the participants to freely associate answers to certain questions. Answers can be stated, written on a flip chart, or posted individually on Post-It notes. The facilitator can also engage participants and drawing connections between answers.

- "Brainstorm 5 ways homelessness can be eradicated in town."
- "Generate 20 solutions to apathy on campus."
- "List the social issues involved in this work."
- "What is 'empowerment'?"

STAND & DECLARE

The facilitator makes a statement to the group, to which members can strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Groups form around each of the four responses to the statement, or along a continuum line, showing the group's "differences." Members from each opinion group are asked to explain their stance, fleshing out the many facets of the issue. This activity helps everyone learn to disagree without being disagreeable, and to acknowledge different perspectives. Questions are intentionally stated to allow for personal interpretation and to limit responses to one of the four categories. Some group members may want to take some sort of an intermediate stance, but should be encouraged to choose the stance about which they feel the strongest, or which is their instinctive response. Questions should proceed from lower risk to higher risk, more controversial statements. Participants can then discuss how it felt to be limited & categorized.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

The group is divided in two, with half of the student forming a tight circle in the center of the room, facing outward. The remaining students then form a circle around the inner circle, such that each student in the outer circle faces a student in the inner circle. The facilitator poses a question for each pair to answer to each other. After a few minutes, either the inner or outer circle is asked to rotate a specified number of spaces to the right or left. Another question is asked for the new pair to discuss. This activity goes on as long as desired, giving students the opportunity to have 1-on-1 discussions with different people in the group/class.

FISH BOWLS

This activity provides an opportunity for a select group of students to discuss an issue, concern, experience, or strategy in an open manner, while other students practice active listening skills. Facilitator identifies a small group to sit in a tight circle, the "Fish Bowl" in the middle of the meeting space. The facilitator may take volunteers, or intentionally form the groups to reflect potentially different points of view (e.g., according to gender, ethnicity, major, age, etc.) Two to three questions are posed of the group in the fish bowl, and others are invited to hear their perspective, without interruption. A different group can then be asked to sit in the fish bowl, with the same or different questions posed. This is a useful exercise to explore different perspectives.

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

In every group or environment there exists a natural tendency toward equilibrium. A force field represents powers that are opposing change and those that are working towards change.

A simple Force Field Analysis lists pros and cons on a chart. Participants chart both on paper and discuss what issues the group is capable of changing. How can the group break the forces that are working towards equilibrium?

For example, forces that keep children in poverty may be: lack of education, inadequate health care, poor nutrition, violence. Alternatively, forces that help get people out of poverty include: caring community members, present loving fathers, school nutrition programs, educational resources. *Other examples:*

- *What forces cultivate an environment that embraces diversity?*
- *What forces marginalize some people/ideas on campus?*
- *What forces prevent people from living out their faith?*

VISIONING

This activity "transports" students to another time/place to picture another way of life, to put themselves in other's shoes, to envision future goals and plans. Students sit comfortably, shut their eyes, and clear their minds, then listen as the facilitator guides them through the scene they are to imagine. The facilitator gives some description, but focuses mostly on questions that invite the students to visualize their own details. Students should put their minds in the scene, imagining the details, feelings, thoughts, and actions that relate.

At the conclusion of the activity, give students a few minutes to write down key words/phrases that remind them of what they envisioned. Invite students to discuss their visions, to draw them (individually or in groups), or simply to keep them to themselves for future reference. Group reflection may also focus the similarities and differences between the ideas. Did some students focus on more positive visions/opportunities than others? Were some students constrained by what they believed was realistic? Were stereotypes or assumptions involved?

- *Have students envision the upcoming experience PRIOR to it. Later discuss the accuracy of these visions, stereotypes involved, deficits vs. assets, etc.*
- *Envision the "ideal" community - Who do you see? What are they doing? What about other institutions/structures? How is it laid out physically? Discussion: Does this vision impose our cultural values? Can/should we make it a reality?*
- *After the experience, have students envision how they will enact the lessons they learned. What actions will they take? How will they be different?*