

FACILITATING REFLECTION

- **Facilitation** is something you do *with* a group, rather than *to* the group.
- The facilitator's neutrality throughout the process is crucial, however, they must also remain honest at all times (they are not expected to be an expert).
- Observe respect and equality with participants, working to ensure that all members participate.

Logistics

- When providing participants with basic information about the program, include information about reflection sessions, including when and how they will take place.
- Providing information about broader issues relating to the project aids in understanding. This includes information about the population the group will be working with within the context of larger social issues such as racism, oppression and privilege.
- Knowing the expectations and assumptions of the participants including what participants hope to gain from the project and any concerns going into the project can help in knowing what issues to address, as well as what issues may arise.

Why do we REFLECT?

In order for reflection to be successful, participants must have a good understanding of why reflection is important.

- Reflection is a crucial component of **Service-learning**, which links community service *with structured reflection* to promote academic learning. (distinct from Volunteering)

Direct action involves providing service to individuals at the agency or site or in the community. *An example of this type of service is tutoring children.*

Reflection serves as the bridge between the experiences and the learning and allows those participating in service to:

- Think critically about their experience.
- Understand the complexity of their service experience and put it in a larger context.
- Challenge, although not necessarily change, personal attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, privileges, prejudices, and stereotypes.
- Transform a single project into further involvement and/or broader issue awareness.
- Ask "Why?"

Activities

Simply put, reflection involves getting people to talk about their experiences; the following examples are an effective way to begin the conversation. Reflection can take place in a variety of settings and structures. Whatever the situation, the facilitator's role is to assure that it happens in a safe and democratic way.

1. Discussion

Reflection Questions

- What have you learned about yourself?
- How did this experience challenge your assumptions and stereotypes?
- How does this experience compare to others you've had?
- Describe what a typical day might be like for someone who uses the services of the organization you worked with?

What? So what? Now what? (see handout)

Review the detail of the experience, move toward critical thinking, problem solving, and creating an action plan.

2. Role Plays

Students identify a problem situation and assuming the identities of those persons affected by the problem in order to act out possible solutions. This form of reflection is unique because it asks participants to understand the experiences of others. For example, a role play about a parent who does not want their child disciplined by a volunteer tutor requires that a participant assume the role of the parent and try to understand the reasons for the parents' feelings.

3. Group Exercises

Stand and Declare

The facilitator makes a statement to the group, to which members can strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree by forming around each of the responses, showing the group's "differences." Members from each group are asked to explain their stance, generating conversation that fleshes out the questions at hand. Participants must listen carefully, disagree without being disagreeable, and are permitted to change positions.

Pair and Share

Participants pair with one or two others to share ideas on a specified topic. This is a helpful way to encourage participation from individuals who may not feel comfortable sharing with the whole group.

Fish Bowls

Selected volunteers sit in a tight circle in the middle of the room and discuss a particular topic, answering specific questions, while other members of the group remain quiet and observe. The goal is for those observing to notice the different perspectives presented by fellow participants.

Evaluation

Evaluation of each community service experience is important in determining to what extent the goals and learning objectives of the project were met. Evaluation helps ensure the success of the next service project -- reinforcing design and implementation practices. Service projects should be evaluated from several perspectives.

Develop a brief set of questions and ask participants to respond. Questions might include:

- To what extent did the experience meet expectations?
- What might have made the experience better?
- What community needs did your service fulfill?
- What community need was not addressed?