

DISCUSSING VALUES

An idea adapted from the work of Dr Bill Belanger, University of Ottawa

The aim of this exercise is to allow participants to explore how individual values and perceptions can influence our reactions either verbally or non-verbally.

1. Divide into groups of 3. Each person to adopt one role

- * The Young Person (aged between 11-13)
- * The Teacher/Youth worker
- * The Observer

2. You should rotate the roles after each statement

3. Open the envelope and place the statement cards face down

4. The 'Young Person' picks up the statement card and reads the statement or asks the question to the teacher/youth worker. Once the teacher/youth worker has responded, the young person should enter into a dialogue with the teacher. The person playing the role of the young person can develop the character of the young person - the young person can be a 'compliant' young person or one that is thoroughly inquisitive and cheeky! The choice is yours.

5. The teacher/youth worker attempts to respond bearing in mind, this exercise is about being aware of your own values and perceptions and how these might affect your answers. The answers should be mindful that the young person asking the question might be of a different faith, culture, ethnic group, gender, ability and so on.

6. The observer's role is to observe for how the teacher/youth worker responds. Jot down the strategies used by the teacher/youth worker. The observer should also stop the exercise after a few minutes.

7. At the end of the exercise, come together with the other triads and discuss the strategies used.

8. Hand out the sheet by Dr. Bill Belanger as background notes.

The cards below should be **printed** and cut up. Each group should be given one complete set of cards. Place the set of cards face down with the person taking the role of the young person picking up one card at a time and asking the question written on it to the participant playing the adult role. Please ensure that each participant gets the opportunity to play both roles.

Where is heaven?	I've got a secret. If I tell you will you promise not to tell?
Why can't I call him a 'Hun'? He is always calling me a 'Tim'?	I'm not sitting next to Surindar he wears a tea cloth round his head
I can swear if I want to, my mum always does. Are you saying she is wrong?	John says he does not believe in God. John's bad isn't he?
You said we could have a party next Saturday in the hall, but Kevin says we can't because some Jewish group needs it or something. That's not fair.	Singing sectarian songs helps the team. What's wrong with that?
My religion says I should not have sex before marriage. Do you agree?	We were going to go for a burger but Jamal says he cannot eat that meat and Susie only eats carrots

Discussing Values - Post Exercise Discussion

Responding to young people's value questions:

The questions people ask often imply values either in the question or in the expected response. Young people often pose these questions in a disarming manner. Unprepared for the specific question at a particular time, teachers often struggle for an appropriate reply. The teacher's reaction usually communicates the adults value system either verbally or non verbally. Often the hesitancy of reply communicates a message. Although it is impractical for teachers/youth workers to prepare and rehearse responses to all such questions, it is possible for adults to prepare in three ways:

1. **Individually and with peers, explore and articulate beliefs and values about a wide variety of issues.**
2. **In simulation practice react to a number of values related questions (The Discussing Values Exercises in which you have been engaged).**
3. **Learn a set of strategies for reacting to values related questions.**

1. Set the ground rules.

Early in dealing with child/young person/en/young people, set the ground rules for your relationship.

The following are suggested:

As individuals we all have the right to our private personal thoughts.

Things to do with schoolwork are not private from the teacher.

Personal matters are private.

If a child/young person/young person shares a personal thought with the adult, the adult would respect a privacy.

However, some private matters a teacher/youth worker must share with others (e.g. child/young person abuse). The adult assures the child/young person that, if a private matter must be shared, with others, the teacher will help the child/young person deal with it.

These ground rules provide the adult and the child/young person with the right to response to questions by saying, "That's a private, personal matter."

2. Recognise the question as legitimate and difficult.

- a. Repeat the question to provide thinking time.
- b. "That's a good question."
- c. "Many people have struggled with that question".
- d. "That's not the type of question that has a simple answer."

3. Explore what the young person knows and why the question was asked

- a. "What made you think of that at this time?"
- b. "What do you think?"
- c. "Why do you ask?"

4. Explore the circumstances

- a. "Did anything else happen?"
- b. "What exactly was said?"

5. Diffuse aggression and confrontation.

- a. "Let's look for a solution."

- b. "We'll deal with this in a few minutes."
- c. "Write down what happened."

6. Check with the home value base.

- a. "Have you asked your parents?"
- b. "What do you do about that at home?"

7. Recognise jurisdiction.

- a. "There are different rules in different places. At school we do it this way."
- b. "In other situations others may think that what you did (said) is appropriate."
- c. "When I go to a hockey game I yell and cheer. This is not a hockey game."

8. Declare the question to be inappropriate.

- a. "We are not dealing with that at this time."
- b. "Save that question until later." Specify a private time.
- c. "That question is inappropriate at this time (in this class etc)."

9. Acknowledge different beliefs.

- a. "It is difficult to believe what you cannot see."
- b. "Some people believe that _____ : other people believe _____. Both believe that they are correct. You are deciding what you believe."

10. Admit ignorance.

- a. "I don't know."
- b. "I don't have an answer to that. Where do you think we should look to find out?"

11. Change terminology.

- a. "stealing" to "borrowing"
- b. "hate" to "dislike"
- c. "sex" to "gender"

12. Recognise differences.

- a. "There are three kinds of differences :
Good differences,
Bad differences,

Unimportant differences,

Which is this?" or

- b. "That is an unimportant difference" (once the above has been established)

13. Reverse the situation (Reciprocity) the Golden Rule.

- a. "What would it feel like if you were the other person?"
- b. "If it's all right for you would it be all right for him?"
- c. "Is that fair?"

14. Generalise the situation.

- a. "What would it be like if everyone did that?"
- b. "That might be all right if it happened once. What would it be like if it happened often?"