



## Reflection Questions and Activities

### Reflection Questions

Reflection provides volunteers the opportunity to connect their community engagement experiences with previous life experiences and observations. When done well, reflection activities can deepen volunteers' understanding of themselves and the community to which they have committed themselves. Reflection questions should ask students to think about both themselves and the project, and to analyze the social issue the project addresses. Formal reflection sessions can be facilitated by Landis Center professional staff upon request. Some sample reflection questions include:

#### *General Personal Reflection*

- What do you bring to this experience? How much effort are you willing to put forth?
- How did this experience make you feel? How do you think it made others feel?
- What assumptions and expectations did you bring to this experience? What assumptions and expectations do you think others brought about you?
- How did your experience reveal your values, attitudes, and biases? How did it challenge or reinforce your values, attitudes, and biases?
- What was it like to work with community members and other students from different ethnic or cultural communities? How are your life experiences similar or different from theirs?
- In what ways did you do well in this experience? What personal characteristics helped you do well? What was difficult for you? What personal characteristics contributed to your difficulties?
- How have you changed as a result of this experience? How will these changes affect your future behaviors?

#### *Project-Based Questions*

- What are the strengths and limitations of the project?
- Does the project address immediate needs or long-term solutions?
- If the project continued, would the problem go away eventually?
- If the project stopped in order to try another approach to the issue, would the community suffer?
- Are there assets in the community that are not being tapped? Is our involvement so focused on the community's deficits that we haven't seen its assets?

### ***General Analytical Questions***

- What concepts/theories/facts/principles have you learned that relate to your experience? To what extent were they validated or challenged by the experience?
- What do we know about the social issue being addressed and about how it has affected this community in particular?
- What are the symptoms of the problem, and what are the causes?
- What social issues, such as racism, class stratification, and sexism, are connected to this problem? To what extent can a difference be made on this issue without addressing these social problems?
- How do differences in power and privilege emerge in this experience? What underlying systems influence these power dynamics? What are their effects?
- What underlying systems maintain the problem and the power dynamics? How can they be addressed? Dismantled?
- What ethical issues emerged during this experience?
- How do the ethical principles and practices of your discipline align, or not align, with the core beliefs of the community or organization you are working with?
- What tensions between individual interest and common good did you observe? What trade-offs between them occurred? To whom were they beneficial? Were they appropriate?
- What is progress? Is progress good for everyone?

### ***Questions to Explore Future Action***

- Is enough known about the issue in this community or is more research needed?
- Who needs to understand the problem better? Why?
- Have the voices of all community members been heard? What steps have been taken to ensure everyone agrees on the direction of the effort?
- Is more funding needed? Who would use the money and what would they use it for? Who can be approached for funding?
- What laws or policies affect the issue? How did they come to be?
- What stance do local and/or national politicians take on the issue?
- How are other groups or individuals working to address the problem? How might a coalition coordinate the effort? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
- What campus or community organizations could be tapped to make the effort stronger?
- How can students use the knowledge and skills they gain in college, particularly in their career fields, to address the issue?

## Reflection Activities

### ***Journals***

Journaling requires students to organize their thoughts and allow them space to reflect privately. There are several different models of effective journaling. These include:

- Personal Journal – Students write freely about their experiences, with or without a prompt, usually weekly. Journals can be submitted periodically to the instructor and/or be used as a resource for a culminating essay.
- Highlighted Journal – Before submitting their personal journal, students read through their entries and highlight sections that directly relate to concepts covered in class.
- Key Phrase Journal – Students are asked to integrate key words and phrases from course material into their journal entries. Students could also create their own list of key phrases to include.
- Double-entry Journal – Students record their personal thoughts and reactions on the left page of the journal and write about key issues from academic course material on the right. They then draw arrows connecting relationships between the sides.
- Critical Incident Journal – Students focus on the analysis of a specific event that occurred within the designated time period. Students are asked describe their response to the event and articulate an action plan for how to handle it in the future. Prompts for a critical incident journal include:
  - Why was this experience significant to you?
  - What underlying issues surfaced as a result of this experience?
  - How will this incident influence your future behavior?
- Three-part Journal – Students divide each page of their journal into three sections. In the top section, they describe an experience they had during the designated time period. In the middle section, they analyze how course content relates to the experience. In the bottom section, students discuss how the experience and course content can be applied to their personal and/or professional life.

*Adapted from: "Reflection Activities: Tried and True Teaching Methods to Enhance Students' Service-Learning Experience," a packet compiled by Professor Diane Sloan, Miami Dade College, and based on the work of Julie Hatcher and Robert Bringle's "Reflection Activities for the College Classroom" (Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis).*

### ***Oral Reflection***

Oral reflection encourages students to think about and intentionally choose their messages and speech patterns. Some methods of oral reflection include:

- Class discussions
- Focus groups
- Debates
- Stories
- Presentations
- Teaching modules

- Poetry slams

### ***Media Reflection***

Media reflection allows students to express themselves creatively and to capture nuances that may be elusive through words. Media reflection can include:

- Collages
- Posters
- Videos
- Photo journals
- Paintings, sketches, etc.
- Scrap books
- Musical compositions

### ***Online Discussion Groups***

Online discussion groups create a dialogue between students in a non-threatening environment. Discussion groups can take the form of weekly summaries or can be initiated by a prompt from the course instructor. The instructor can serve as moderator, or students can rotate the responsibility. Discussion groups can be created in almost any social media platform including Facebook, GroupMe, SnapChat, or Moodle.