

Religion and dialogue - Agenda

- 9:30am **Welcome and introductions**
Setting ground rules
- Ice-breaker: Stand Up, Sit Down
Activity to introduce participants to the issues that will be addressed later in the day.
- 10am **DVD: Play 'Living in a Multi-faith Society'**
Order free [Link to DVD order form](#)
- 10:20am **Discussion workshops**
Young people split into small groups to discuss key issues around faith, identity and multi-faith living, building on questions raised in the video. Teachers, outside speakers or older, more confident students could facilitate discussions.
- 11:20am **SHORT BREAK**
- 11:40am **Outside speakers: Reflections**
Invite faith leaders from the local community to reflect on some of the issues that have been discussed by the young people in the previous session. Follow up with a question and answer session where young people are able to add their own answers to these statements. If time, share findings from the earlier discussion workshops.
- 12:20pm **LUNCH**
- 1:20pm **Afternoon session - Introduction**
The afternoon session asks young people to think about their common values and about how to deal with potential disagreements.
- Energiser: Listen to me!**
Activity asking students to think about what makes a good and bad listener.
- 1:45pm **Activity: Values and identity**
Participants undertake this activity individually. It asks them to think about their outlook on life and what influences this. Students then bring their sheets with them to the workshops as a prompt for discussions.
- 2pm **Group activities: Similarities and differences**
Students discuss their answers to the previous exercise. Did they choose the same factors? Were they influenced in the same ways?
- Participants choose a moral issue and make up a scenario where people disagree (in groups of three or four). Young people act out scenarios and discuss.
- 2:50pm **Activity: Statement of unity**
Young people agree on a code that everyone should follow if we want to build a successful multi-faith society.

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Students should write this up as a statement of unity. This could be a code of practice for the school or for young people in the local area.

- 3:15pm **Reconvene in the hall.**
Two or three groups read out their codes of practice.
- 3:30pm **Finish**

Additional work: If you have funds you could invite a performance poet, community artist or musician in to work with the young people on scenarios and solutions and to produce art work symbolising the similarities and differences between young people from different faiths and backgrounds.

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Additional notes for activities

1. Ice-breaker (10-15 minutes)

- At the beginning of the conference ask everyone in the room to stand up. Read out a series of statements. For example:
 - I am really glad this conference started so early in the morning
 - Religious education is my favourite subject
 - I like learning about people with different beliefs to me
 - My religion is very important to me
 - I have personally experienced discrimination
 - I think people from different religions get on well in my local area
 - I sometimes have prejudices about people who are different from me
 - I believe that violence is the best way to sort out a disagreement
- Participants can only sit down once they have agreed with a statement. The activity finishes once the whole group is sitting down, or if this happens very quickly, it can be repeated.
- This activity should start the participants thinking about issues that will be addressed later in the day.

2. DVD followed by discussion session (1 hour 20 minutes)

- Play the DVD Living in a Multi-faith Society (20 minutes). Ask students to listen carefully and take notes to remind themselves of what is being talked about.
- Then break the participants up into groups of no more than ten and ask them to discuss some of the issues raised in the DVD.
- For a detailed description of the DVD resource please see the accompanying activities booklet, which is available on the Diversity and Dialogue website. As an alternative to the activities below you could choose one section of the DVD and go through the activities suggested in the booklet.
- **Initial thoughts** (10 minutes)
Ask the group for their initial reactions to the DVD. Did they think it was realistic? What do they remember the characters talking about? Is there anything they particularly agreed or disagreed with?
- **Agreement lines** (15 minutes)
Label one side of the space 'Agree' and the other side 'Disagree'. Students have to position themselves along this 'agreement line' to illustrate their point of view on the following statements:
 - youth culture makes it hard to be religious
 - it's easier to be friends with people who have the same beliefs as you
 - religion gives you rules to follow, so you're not as free to live your own life
 - relationships between people from different religions are getting better

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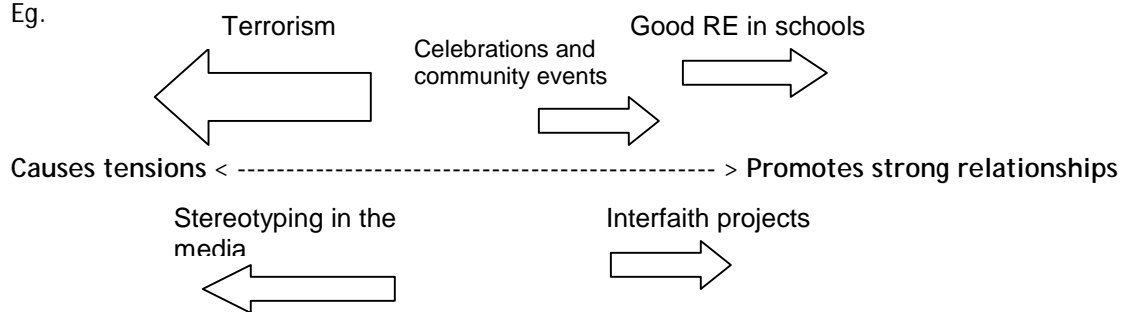


- Draw out discussion of the reasons why people have positioned themselves in certain places. The participants can move positions at any time during the discussion, if they change their minds.
- **Multi-faith living (20 minutes)**
When discussing the statement 'relationships between people from different religions are getting better', the group may have commented that in some places relations are getting better, but in others they are getting worse.
- To draw out this discussion, ask the young people to mark relationships between people from different faiths and backgrounds out of ten:
 - in their school
 - in their town or local area
 - in the world.
- Write down the average scores for each area, as these can be compared with the other groups during feedback. Does everyone agree? Does the group have the same scores for the three areas? Why or why not?

This activity prompts a discussion about the factors that can affect relationships between people from different faiths and backgrounds. This has already been discussed in the DVD. The actors cite politics and outside conflicts, the media, religious rules and religious education as factors influencing how well people from different faiths and backgrounds get on.

- Ask the group to think about what makes relationships stronger and what can cause tensions between different groups. They can start with the factors mentioned on the DVD and then add in extra factors too.
- Ask them to write their ideas on arrows and place them on a flipchart. They should make bigger arrows for the factors with the strongest influence.

Eg.



- **Building understanding (15 minutes)**
Challenge the group to think up their own ideas for building better relationships between people from different faiths and backgrounds. Give the students the following brief:
 - You have been given £10,000 to run a project to help build better relationships between people from different faiths and backgrounds. Describe what you would do with the money.

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- You will then have a meeting with the Prime Minister to explain how you spent the money. You can also give him (or her) some advice. What would advice would you give?
- The young people should work individually or in pairs and then feed back to the rest of the group. The facilitator can play the role of Prime Minister. You could also ask students to choose one of the projects and then share this with the entire conference.

3. Outside speakers - Reflections (40 minutes)

The young people will have had a significant amount of time to consider their own thoughts and opinions. It may now be useful to invite in adult representatives from a variety of religions. This will give the conference participants a chance to hear a range of viewpoints and experiences.

Speakers could be invited through places of worship, a local interfaith network (see www.interfaith.org.uk), or through your Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. You may also want to ask the young people before the event if they could recommend speakers from their own communities.

Either the speakers can address the whole conference, or you could ask individual speakers to run several short workshops with smaller groups of young people.

To give focus to the discussions you may want to ask the speakers to consider some of the same topics as the young people. For example, they could share their thoughts on some of the statements used in the agreement lines. Remember to leave plenty of time for questions at the end.

4. Afternoon session - Introduction (10 minutes)

The afternoon session asks young people to think about their common values and about how to deal with potential disagreements. It challenges the young people to think about their own values and opinions and where these come from. It then identifies issues on which they may disagree and asks them to think about the best ways to deal with differences of opinion.

5. Energiser activity - Listen to me! (15 minutes)

- Divide the participants into pairs. They can stay in their seats in the main hall.
- One participant should try talking for one minute on a subject, for example, 'my religion', 'my community' or 'my heroes'.
- Their partner should try to look as uninterested as possible.
- Repeat the exercise, this time the partner should try to be really interested and to listen properly.
- Repeat the exercise, swapping roles.
- Bring the group back together and ask:
 - How did it feel to listen actively to your partner?
 - How did it feel when you were being really listened to?

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- How did it feel when you weren't being listened to? Was it harder to talk?

This exercise demonstrates the importance of being a good listener.

- Ask the participants to shout out opinions about what it means to be a good listener. Take notes on a flipchart. They might come up with a list like this:

Good listener	Bad listener
Eye contact Person looks interested Person makes comments or asks questions They nod and react to what's being said They try to stay on the topic	No eye contact The person looks bored They look at their watch, or at other people They don't say anything... or just say 'yes' and 'no' They change the subject to talk about themselves They don't ask questions or they are dismissive

6. Activity: Values and identity (15 minutes)

- Give out copies of this worksheet and ask the young people to stay in their seats. They should complete the following activity individually.

What affects your outlook on life?
 Circle the five factors below that you think most influence the way you think about life.

Gender	Religion	Nationality
Hobbies / interests	Politics	Where you live
Culture / ethnicity	School	Parents
Friends	Heroes	Government or Law
The media	Other _____	

Rank the five factors in order of importance. Then write down the ways in which they influence you.

This activity aims to show that religion is not the only influence on a person's outlook. For some participants it will be much more important than for others.

7. Group activities: Similarities and differences (45 minutes)

Next, the young people should split back into groups of around ten. They should bring their Values and Identity sheets with them.

- Discuss worksheets (10 minutes)
 Compare answers to the previous activity, drawing out different ideas of influence and trying to define some of the values that the young people feel are central in their lives.

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Discuss whether the young people highlighted religion as a strong influence and if so, how it impacts on their outlook.

- **Moral issues (15 minutes)**

Read out some of the following scenarios and ask the participants to discuss their opinions about the rights and wrongs of the situation. Ask the young people to think about what influences the way they think. Who might think differently and why? Some issues will be more appropriate for certain groups and you may want to replace these with your own ideas:

1. A boy tells some of his close friends that he thinks he is gay. One of his friends tells him that this means he will go to hell. The boy is very upset.

2. A Jewish girl wants to marry her Muslim boyfriend. Her family wasn't very happy that she was going out with a Muslim boy, but is really angry and upset that she wants to marry him. They say that she must marry a Jewish boy.

3. A 15-year-old Catholic girl tells her friends that she thinks she might be pregnant and one friend gives her the number of an abortion helpline. Her brother overhears the conversation and yells at her, saying that their religion forbids abortion.

4. A girl tells her Muslim friend that she should stop wearing her hijab (headscarf). She says that it makes her look like a terrorist.

5. A boy has decided to become a vegetarian. At lunch, he brings out pictures of animals being slaughtered while his friends are eating their burgers.

- **Acting out (25 minutes)**

In groups of three or four, ask the young people to select one of the scenarios listed above. Ask them to imagine that they are the characters in the scenario and that they have to carry on the scene. They can also choose their own issue or scenario instead.

After 15 minutes the groups should act out their scenarios to each other and discuss.

- Where did the characters agree and disagree?
- What happened and why?
- What are the best ways to deal with differences of opinion without having arguments?

8. Statement of unity (25 minutes)

Interfaith groups sometimes write statements of unity to demonstrate their common values and their commitment to working together. The example below was agreed between UK faith leaders.

*In a world scarred by the evils of war, racism, injustice and poverty,
we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we look to our shared future.*

*We commit ourselves,
as people of many faiths,
to work together
for the common good,
uniting to build a better society,
grounded in values and ideals we share:*

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*community,
personal integrity,
a sense of right and wrong,
learning, wisdom and love of truth,*

*care and compassion,
justice and peace,
respect for one another,
for the earth and its creatures.*

*We commit ourselves,
in a spirit of friendship and co-operation,
to work together
alongside all who share our values and ideals,
to help bring about a better world
now and for generations to come.*

- Challenge the young people, working in small groups, to come up with their own statement of unity. This could work as a motto for their school or local area and could be written as a poem, rap or song. They might consider the following elements:
 - What kind of world they want to live in
 - What kind of problems they would like to solve
 - What values they all share
 - How they would like people to act towards each other
 - What they, as young citizens, pledge to do themselves
- Ask some of the more confident participants to read out their statements to the whole conference.

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