

Discussion starters: Values, views and identity

These activities aim to get young people thinking about their personal beliefs and values. They get participants talking about their own identity and the different factors that can influence a person's identity. They ask young people to consider how their values affect their views on local and global issues, and what motivates them to care about important issues in the world today.

Some of these activities have been adapted from JCORE resources. For more information about JCORE educational resources please visit their website, www.jcore.org.uk.

Activity one: Describing values

Time: 30 minutes

Equipment: paper, pens, container or hat and a watch.

Method:

This is an energising activity that asks participants to describe and draw abstract concepts and values. It aims to demonstrate that these concepts can be difficult things to describe. It should not be played as a serious or competitive game and will work best with between 6 and 10 players in total.

Part one

- Divide participants into two or three teams of three or four people. Each should choose one person to be the first 'talker'.
- Write some of the concepts below on pieces of paper, fold them and put them into a container.
- Ask the first talker to pick a piece of paper from the container and start the timer.
- The talker has one minute to describe the word written on the paper. They must not say any part of the word itself, or anything that rhymes with it. Neither can they spell it out.
- Their team has to guess the word that they are describing. If they succeed the talker should take another word and continue until a minute is up.
- Any unguessed words should go back in the container. Guessed words should be kept by the team. Each guessed word counts as one point.
- Then the next team have a go and so on. Participants take turns to be the talker.
- Once all of the words have been used up, the team with the most pieces of paper wins.

Sample concepts:

Love, Charity, Faith, Loyalty, Friendship, Obedience, Hope, Respect, Wealth, Work, Modesty, Equality, Peace, War, Anger, Embarrassment, Beauty, Jealousy, Pride, Happiness, Prejudice, Laziness, Environment, Belonging, Community, Worship, Power, Equality, Justice, Family.

Part two

- Put all of the pieces of paper back in the container. It is time for the drawing round.
- Ask each participant to think of a new word (or two if there are not many players). This word should be another value, emotion or concept. Participants should write their words on pieces of paper and add them to the container.

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- The container now contains the words from the first round and also a few new words.
- This round follows the same format as the first round. However, this time the 'talker' becomes the 'artist'.
- The artist picks out a word from the container and must try to draw it. The rest of the team have to guess what s/he is drawing.
- The artist has one minute to draw as many objects as s/he can.
- The next team then takes a turn.
- Continue until there are no more words in the container.
- Count up scores and announce the winners.
- After the game, ask the participants to discuss the words they had to draw or describe.
 - Were the words easy to draw and describe? What kinds of words would have been easier or more difficult?
 - In the drawing round, what kind of pictures did they draw?
 - Many religions use symbols and stories to help people understand different values. Can the group think of any? (Examples might include the dove of peace, or parables which illustrate concepts such as neighbourliness).
 - Did they use religious symbols or stories during the game?

Extension activity

- Ask the group to choose one value that they think is important. They should each write a poem or short story illustrating the value and draw a symbol or picture to represent it.
- This could be done on square or hexagonal pieces of paper or tile. The different value pieces could then be displayed as a patchwork.

Activity two: Identity Charts

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: flipchart paper

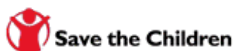
Method:

- Give each student a blank piece of flipchart paper. Ask them to write down the ten words, phrases, symbols or pictures that describe them. It is important to stress that they shouldn't think much about this, just write down what comes into their mind first.
- Their charts could include gender, age, and physical characteristics but also cultural identifiers such as ties to particular groups or organisations.
- After about 5 minutes, stop the young people if they haven't finished and ask them to rank these ideas, number one being the most important and number ten being the least important.
- Ask them to share and compare their identity charts in small groups. Have they picked out similar identity markers?

Extension activity:

- Ask the participants to discuss the following questions in small groups:

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- How do your top three choices affect your behaviour and attitudes.
 - How would you be different if this part of your identity didn't exist?
 - How might people treat you differently?
- For example, 'If I was not a woman, I don't think I would be afraid to walk home on my own. If I was not a Hindu, I wouldn't go to the temple and I would have to think harder about what my beliefs are.'

Activity three: Group Identity warm-up

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: none

Method:

This activity gets participants moving and talking. It also raises issues about group identities and about different factors that can unite and divide.

- Clear some space in the centre of the room.
- Tell the group that they need to divide themselves into groups of at least 3 people. You should let the group work this out themselves but make sure they follow these rules:
 - All members of the group need to share something in common. This could be something visible, or something invisible. It could be something from taken from the descriptions in the 'Identities Chart'
 - Everyone must be part of a group. Nobody is to be left out.
- When the young people have formed their groups, find out how they grouped themselves. Eg people wearing jeans and people not wearing jeans, or by the football team they support.
- Then ask participants to split themselves in a different way. Each group should have at least one new member. Repeat twice more.
- Afterwards bring the group back together into a circle.
- Discuss the following questions with the group. Try and encourage every member of the group to contribute.
 - Was it easy or difficult to split into groups?
 - How did you feel when the group was dividing?
 - Did you feel part of an 'Us' or a 'Them'?
 - Did you choose visible or invisible factors?

Activity four: What do I care about?

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: handout (see below), flipchart paper with a picture of an archery target

- Ask the participants to think about what global and local issues concern them in school, in their local area, in Britain and in the world as a whole. Write them down on the handout below.
- For example:

I am concerned about walking around the area I live at night.

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I am concerned about discrimination against Muslims in Britain. I think it has got worse since 9/11.

I am concerned about the environment and climate change.

- Ask the young people to compare their ideas in small groups. Did they come up with similar or different issues? Are there any that conflict?
- Ask each participant to choose one local and one global issue that they consider the most important and write each one on a different post-it note. Ask them to place their post-it notes on the outside of a large archery-style target. If someone has already put down an issue there is no need to write it a second time.
- Each person then walks round the target and if they care about that issue, they move it one place towards the centre. You will end up with a visual measure of the local and global issues that most concern the group as a whole.

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Activity one: What matters? Handout

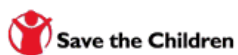
My school

My local area

Britain

The world

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Activity five: Why do I care?

Time: 5- 10 minutes

Materials: cut-out statements, blu tack

Method:

- Stick the following statements on different walls around the room.
- Ask the young people to walk around the room reading the statements.
- They should each choose one local and one global issue, from those on the target in the previous activity.
- For each issue they should think about the statement that best applies. Which best describes their motivation for caring?

Alternative method:

- Stick the statements on different walls around the room. Ask the young people to walk around and read all of the statements.
- After 5 minutes, the facilitator should shout out 'local' and the young people should stand by the statement that best summarises their feelings on the local issue that they picked in the previous activity. Ask a couple of participants to explain their choices. Draw out the different issues chosen by the young people and their different motivations for caring. Are some reasons 'better' reasons than others?
- Then the facilitator should shout out 'global', and the young people should stand by the statement that best summarises their feelings about the global issue. Did they choose the same statements? Why or why not?
- If the young people dispute these statements, challenge them to think of their own reasons.

Eg. I care about global warming because I feel a responsibility to make a difference

1. I care about _____ because I feel a responsibility to make a difference
2. I care about _____ because it personally affects me
3. I care about _____ because I want to get rid of injustice
4. I care about _____ because of my religious values
5. I care about _____ because people tell me that I should
6. I care about _____ because everyone is talking about it
7. I care about _____ because I want to be a good person
8. I care about _____ because I suffer if others do
9. I care about _____ because I believe in respect
10. I care about _____ because I am anxious about the future
11. I care about _____ because I have been taught that it's important

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Activity six: Different perspectives

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: handout, see below

Method:

- Divide participants into small groups of three or four.
- Give out the handout below and ask them to discuss each issue using the following questions:
 - What do you think about this issue?
 - What makes you feel the way you do?
 - How might people with different beliefs feel? Would this be any different?
 - Is religion relevant to the issue?
- For each example, ask them to consider their own views and how they think people from the religions underneath might feel.
- Feedback and compare ideas as a group.

1. Conflict in Israel and Palestine - What's the solution?

Muslim

Jewish

Not religious

2. HIV and AIDS - how can we stop it spreading?

Roman Catholic

Muslim

Not religious

3. Kashmir - thoughts on the conflict and the earthquake

Hindu

Not religious

Muslim

4. Family life - marriage, children and family relationships

Not religious

Christian

Sikh

5. The environment - how can we best protect it?

Not religious

Church of England

Jewish

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