

Reflection

Reflection

Processing your service experiences...

So you are almost ready to leave the service project and are wondering what to do so that you and the rest of the participants don't return exhausted and confused and more drained than when they left. It's reflection time.

Reflection gives you a chance to think clearly about what you are doing and the experiences you have been having. It allows you to ask those tough questions like *Who am I? What do I stand for? What do I believe in?* and allows you to fully process what is happening in your life.

Reflection is the key to committed service because it leads to thoughtful action and provides an opportunity to search for long-term solutions to the problems we as a society are facing. It is a chance for you to realize that you are not alone in your experience, a chance to share your stories and to learn from all perspectives.

Although group reflection is a critical point in your service experience, it is a fairly easy process to bring about. It can be

done while volunteering, during breaks, on the ride home, and at a group meeting once you have returned to campus. All you need is a quiet place where the group can have some undisturbed time alone and someone to facilitate the reflection. The facilitator is responsible for asking the questions that get and keep the group thinking,

Reflection without action leads to cynicism and action without reflection leads to burnout.

talking and processing their experiences. The facilitator should watch to make sure everyone is heard and that there is a safe space for everyone to share their thoughts and opinions.

There are many reflection models, but we have found what works best for most groups is The What? We have outlined its three steps at the bottom of this page.

A common misconception about

reflection is that it only occurs once the service is over. Members of the groups should process their experiences as they are happening and are encouraged to think about what they are doing as they are doing it.

Reflection sessions may allow group members to let off steam if an activity is not going as expected and to make new plans for next time. Reflection does not always have to take place in a group, either. Individual reflection activities include journal writing, drawing, acting or using other forms of creative expression.

Reflection without action leads to cynicism, and action without reflection leads to burnout. By making sure that your service includes both quality projects as well as time for group and individual processing and reflection, you are more likely to ensure a successful experience that benefits the individual, the group, and the community much more in the long run.

Participants should use Reflection as a tool to make changes in their personal lives that benefit the community.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; line-height: 40px; font-size: 24px; background-color: black; color: white;">1</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">The What</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; line-height: 40px; font-size: 24px; background-color: black; color: white;">2</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">The So What</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; line-height: 40px; font-size: 24px; background-color: black; color: white;">3</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">The Now What</div>
<p>Step one pertains to the substance of the group interaction and what has happened to each individual. It deals with facts, occurrences and leads naturally into interpretation. The What? is used to start the reflection process by asking <i>What happened today? or What did each of you do?</i> As a group leader this is a great way to start discussion at free times during the day.</p>	<p>Step two pertains to the difference the experience made to individuals. It looks at the consequences of the day's actions and gives meaning to them. Members of the group abstract and generalize what they are learning and shift from the descriptive into the interpretive. At this point the questions asked are usually, <i>What did your experience mean to you? And/or What did you learn from today?</i></p>	<p>Step three involves the process of taking lessons learned from the experience and reapplying them to other situations and the larger picture. It is a time for goal setting and long range planning. The Now What? can range from discussions of <i>What will we do next time? To What will we do when we get back to campus? And What changes can we make in our personal life choices?</i></p>