

SESSION 4

VALUING DIFFERENCES

Purposes

- To discuss and clarify difficulties inherent in seeking and valuing different viewpoints.
- To discover and reinforce benefits of including different viewpoints in members' service.
- To broaden members' understanding of differences by:
 - Listing factors that profoundly affect different viewpoints.
 - Working with a framework of nine different approaches to activity, time, and human relationships.
- To connect self-knowledge with strategies to manage and appreciate those approaches that are most different from their own.
- To use questioning skills from Session 2 to create questions for the panelists who will participate in Session 5.

Session at a Glance

Min		Activities	Materials
20	1	Welcome, Warm-Up "Different Objects"	Prepared wall chart, boxes of common objects
45	2	Discuss Field Assignment #3	Prepared wall chart
25	3	Working with Differences	Handout A
10	4	Field Assignment #4 "Different Approaches"	Handout B, Handout C
20	5	Questions for the Panelists, Session 5, The Learning Store	Blank wall chart, marker Handout D

Preparation for the Session

1. Put together boxes of common objects for Warm-Up activity.*
2. Prepare three wall charts:
 - a) Purposes of the session.
 - b) Write the two questions in Activity #2, Step 3.
 - c) Write the quote from the AmeriCorps handbook shown in Activity #3, Step 1.
3. Copy and punch Handouts A - D for members.

**Note: Put together one box for each group. Using a shoe box, old cereal box or something similar, put in ten different but common objects. Some examples are a tin can, an old light bulb, a rock, a stick, a magazine, a bit of twine, an old sock, an extra key, a paper cup, a paper clip. Include a variety of objects in each box.*

Activity #1

Welcome and Warm-Up Activity

20 minutes

STEPS

Welcome members and review the purpose of this session using the prepared wall chart.

Warm-Up Activity “Different Objects”

1. Split members into groups of four to five members.
2. Give each group a box of ten assorted objects and tell them they must use these objects to make a house. They must use **all** of the objects in some way. If they want, they can include three other objects found in the room. Tell them they have ten minutes.
3. After they finish, let members walk around and look at other groups' houses and how objects were used.
4. Bring the large group together and ask:

What happened when you tried to build the houses?

(Examples: People may want to relate a funny story of their house falling down, stealing an idea from a neighboring group, or solving a problem.)

What were some difficulties with using all of the objects?

(Examples: It was difficult to use some things. An object kept falling over or not doing what we wanted it to do.)

What were some of the benefits of using all of the objects?

(Examples: It was challenging. We came up with new or funny ideas.)

4. Close this activity by summarizing the points made above and asking the following question: What might this activity teach us about working with differences?

Facilitator Note: Make sure the point is made that it can be difficult but rewarding to include differences.

Activity #2

Field Assignment #3 - Valuing Differences

45 minutes

STEPS

Facilitator Note: The purpose of this activity is to have members report on their Field Assignments and discuss lessons learned by including diverse viewpoints in their service. You will also start the process of describing difficulties inherent in seeking and valuing differences and begin to create strategies for overcoming these difficulties.

1. Introduce the activity and break members into small groups of four or five members. Put up the prepared wall chart (Step 3) and explain the tasks. Give the groups 25 minutes.
2. Each person makes a three-minute report as described in Handout C – from the last session (*Field Assignment #3 – Valuing Differences*).
3. After everybody in the small groups has reported, discuss the following two questions written on a wall chart.

! What were the greatest challenges and/or joys you met when working on this field assignment?

! What were the most important lessons you learned by doing this assignment?

4. Bring the large group together and ask: (20 minutes)

! What were some common themes that you heard in the small groups about the challenges, joys, and lessons learned from incorporating different viewpoints?

! How can these insights be used in our work as AmeriCorps members?

(Write responses on a wall chart.)

5. Summarize the main points, thank members for their responses, and close the activity by informing the members you will read a passage that examines the differences between public and private life as explained in, *By The People*.⁴

⁴ *By The People*, edited by Henry Boyte

- Uncovering the many differences that exist within and among communities will reveal a kind of collective wisdom and public power that can be tapped as you try to solve complex problems and create things of lasting value.
- Involvement in public life is a crucial element of service and public work. Three meanings of public are especially relevant for AmeriCorps members. First, public refers to a diverse group of people. It is in public that you encounter people who are different from you. The public world is sometimes characterized by debate, argument, and conflict. Second, public is a quality of space that is open and visible to all. Your actions are visible there for others to see. Finally, public suggests a broad public good that is widely accessible and beneficial. Parks, libraries, community-wide learning projects or community center are all examples. In public life, citizens develop the power, skills, and organizational means to act.
- Public life, or public space, is a realm of difference, public work, accountability, respect, recognition, negotiation, and bargaining; private life is a more protected space of intimacy, spontaneity, similarity, and loyalty. Public space is the terrain of task orientation; private is the arena of personal sustenance.
- While people often enter public life through private concerns, they act with greater effectiveness if they recognize the various dynamics at work in public and private domains.

Activity #3

Working With Differences¹

25 minutes

STEPS

1. Make the transition to this activity by posting and reading the following statement:

“Citizenship doesn’t only mean getting things done for others. It means working with others - people who may be very different from yourself.” (*AmeriCorps Handbook*).

Talking points:

- No matter how strong one’s individual sense of civic responsibility, civic work cannot be done alone.
 - Many factors such as age, gender, and life experiences have a profound effect on developing different viewpoints.
 - In the increasingly diverse realm of civic service, learning to work effectively with differences and diverse viewpoints is a necessary skill.
2. In the large group, pass out Handout A, page 89 and ask members to read it. Then, referring to the handout, discuss the following:

Think of as many assets as possible that each volunteer might bring to the meeting. (*Examples: This person might be more able to face adversity. This person might be more sensitive to the needs of children.*)

List as many factors as possible that might cause deep differences among the volunteers. (*Examples: age, profound life experiences.*)

How did you initially feel about Maria’s volunteers? Do you feel any different after going through the exercise? Why?

3. Summarize the main points and tell members that lessons learned in this activity will be expanded in the next Field Assignment.

¹ Modified from “What Do They Bring,” by Donna Goldstein.

Activity #4

Field Assignment #4 – Different Approaches

10 minutes

STEPS

1. Introduce the assignment by explaining that:
 - Members have made very good progress towards valuing different viewpoints and understanding some of the reasons that people have diverse viewpoints.
 - The purpose of this field assignment is to deepen this understanding through an exercise in self-knowledge as a tool for effective community service. (Remind members of this theme from Sessions 1 and 3.)
2. Pass out Handouts B, page 91 and Handout C, page 97, and ask members to read the first page of Handout B. Then ask them to turn to Handout C read the questions they will discuss for their field assignment.
3. Call for and respond to any questions. Close this portion of the session on Valuing Differences by highlighting any striking points of the session.
4. Inform members that because the next session is a panel discussion with outside speakers, they will not discuss Field Assignment #4 in the session. Therefore we are asking them to discuss the Field Assignment with another AmeriCorps member before the next session.

Activity # 5

Questions for the Panelists, Session 5 The Learning Store

20 minutes

STEPS

1. As the last activity of the session, point out to members that the next session will feature a panel discussion of three or four people who work in various community organizations. In order to make the panel productive, you'd like to have six questions for the panelists to start off the discussions. Remind the members of the questioning skills they learned in Session 2.

2. Lead the group in brainstorming three questions under each of the following two areas:

Self-Interest and Civic Service.

(Example: How did your interests and/or background lead you to your current positions?)

Community Inventory (assets in the community).

(Example: Can you give us an overview of your organization's accomplishments?)

3. Close this activity by informing members that refreshments will be served after the panel discussion so that they can meet the panelists informally.

The Learning Store

Pass back previous Learning Stores and distribute Handout D, page 98, for this session.

SESSION 4

MATERIALS

Handout A, Working With Differences	- 2 pages
Handout B, Different Approaches	- 6 pages
Handout C, Field Assignment #4	- 1 page
Handout D, The Learning Store	- 1 page

Handout A

Working with Differences

The Fun Fair continues....

Excited about coordinating the PTO's annual fund raising event, Maria knew she needed a tremendous amount of help organizing this year's Fun Fair. Most of the parents she knew were willing to contribute to the Fair or do assigned tasks, but they didn't want the greater responsibility of planning and running it. So, to attract more volunteers, she put up announcements in local shops. The announcement read:

***Looking for COMMITTED volunteers with
TIME and INTEREST
to help PLAN AND ORGANIZE the
NEIGHBORHOOD FUN FAIR***

if interested call Maria at: 888- 5252

Maria received ten phone calls. In order to help her plan the first meeting, she asked each person to briefly describe him or herself. Maria's notes are as follow:

Katherine – middle-age, a former nun, teaches pottery classes at a local community center.

Amani – 25, wheel-chair bound after a car crash, plays volleyball, and goes to college part-time.

Peter – 52, currently living at a homeless shelter, has traveled widely, and is a Vietnam veteran.

Nicole – 16, heavily involved with theatre and the arts at her local high school, full of energy.

June – 85, likes to bird-watch and play cards, described herself as shy.

JT – mid twenties, grew up on a very rural farm, just moved to town, and works nights at a bakery.

Handout A continued

Patricia – 34, single mother of four children, ages 7 – 16, works at a small, local church.

Theresa - mid- thirties, sounds wealthy, volunteers for many organizations, has lots of ideas, no children.

Jayesh - 75, born outside of the United States and speaks little English; his grandson is in the elementary school.

Henry - 56, lives in a group home for the mentally challenged, likes puzzles.

HANDOUT B

DIFFERENT APPROACHES²

The purpose of this exercise is to help you understand nine different approaches that people have to viewing the world. These approaches fall under the following categories:

1. Orientation toward **Activity**
2. Orientation toward **Time**
3. Orientation toward **Human Relationships**

By understanding the different values people may attach to each of these aspects of life, you will become more aware of the various approaches people may use to solve problems, make decisions, or function at work and in our society. Through a better understanding of yourself and others, it is easier to appreciate and manage these differences.

Directions. Rank each of the following statements according to its similarity to your own perspective. See the example below for an illustration of the ranking system.

- 1 - Least like me
- 2 - Somewhat like me
- 3 - Most like me

Example

1. 2 a. My decisions are primarily guided by what I have learned.
- 3 b. I "go with the flow" and adapt my decisions to quickly changing circumstances.
- 1 c. When I make a decision, I focus on the result I am looking for.

² Modified from *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*, by H. Ned Seelye, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, MN. 1996

Handout B continued

1. ___ a. My decisions are primarily guided by what I have learned.
___ b. I "go with the flow" and adapt my decisions to quickly changing circumstances.
___ c. When I make a decision, I focus on the result I am looking for.
2. ___ a. I tend to take each day as it comes.
___ b. I tend to keep lists of tasks that I need to accomplish each day.
___ c. In time, things do tend to work themselves out.
3. ___ a. It is hard for me to stop worrying about upcoming events or deadlines.
___ b. Life has its own wisdom. Worrying is a waste of my energy.
___ c. Let's focus on all that today brings, and take care of the rest one day at a time.
4. ___ a. Developing my potential and my sense of self is the most important thing that I can do with my life.
___ b. Being alive and healthy is the most important thing to me: my accomplishments are secondary.
___ c. It would be a waste if I did not achieve something important in my life.
5. ___ a. I prefer to relax and enjoy life as it comes.
___ b. Peace of mind is possible regardless of external circumstances.
___ c. I feel useless if I am not doing something constructive with my time.
6. ___ a. Taking action is more important than commitment to a belief.
___ b. We exist only in relation to other people.
___ c. It is essential to be a good person; being a successful person is not the point.
7. ___ a. You have to be guided by what you think is right, even if you cannot please everyone.
___ b. It works best to have a good leader make the decisions; everyone should cooperate accordingly.
___ c. Decisions affecting a group are more effective if everyone participates in the decision making.
8. ___ a. It is the individual I respect, not his or her position.
___ b. Leaders of a group deserve respect because of their position.
___ c. First and foremost comes unity; people who think of themselves first live at the expense of others.

9. ____a. The leader of a group has to take responsibility for its success or failure.
____b. If someone in my group is having a problem, I am partly responsible for solving it.
____c. I am accountable for my own success or failure.

Scoring Directions:

Place the number you recorded next to each statement in the appropriate space below. Then place the total on the line following the equal sign.

TIME:

1a____ 2c____ 3b____ = ____ Past
1b____ 2a____ 3c____ = ____ Present
1c____ 2b____ 3a____ = ____ Future

ACTIVITY:

4c____ 5c____ 6a____ = ____ Doing
4b____ 5a____ 6c____ = ____ Being
4a____ 5b____ 6b____ = ____ Becoming

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS:

7a____ 8a____ 9c____ = ____ Individual
7c____ 8c____ 9b____ = ____ Mutual
7b____ 8b____ 9a____ = ____ Ranked

The highest number for each dimension indicates your preferred approach. The following pages describe the nine approaches.

Handout B continued

Descriptions of Nine Approaches to Activity, Time, and Human Relationships

Orientation toward Activity

Doing:

Assumption: Taking action is the most important activity.

Finds meaning in: Accomplishments, achievements.

Meaning of work: A "doer" is what he/she *does*. Work is pursued for a living. Relationships are secondary to the task. Work and play are separate activities, but "doers" often work hard *and* play hard.

Being:

Assumption: Self-expression is the most important activity.

Finds meaning in: Spontaneous expression, being oneself, affiliation.

Meaning of work: Work is not directly attached to the ego, nor is it strictly considered a separate activity from leisure. Social and work relationships may be closely intertwined. Relationship-development at work is time well spent; it builds morale and group identity/feeling.

Becoming:

Assumption: Self-development is the most important activity.

Finds meaning in: Process, purpose and intention of activity.

Meaning of work: There is a deep investment in the type of work and its process; both aspects add to one's personal development.

Orientation toward Time

Past:

Assumption: Today flows out of the legacy of the past.

Finds meaning in: Serenity, surrender, history as context and teacher.

Meaning of work: Work is a place to establish and nurture relationships and traditions. There is an awareness of, connection to, and obligation toward the legacy of such relationships and traditions.

Handout B continued

Present:

Assumption: Today is the only reality.

Find meaning in: Carpe diem, "seize the day."

Meaning of work: Work, like life, is to be enjoyed. Present-oriented individuals often bring to work an energy and vitality that is not as frequently embodied by other orientations.

Future:

Assumption: Today is a step toward tomorrow's goals.

Finds meaning in: Establishing and working toward goals, high work ethic.

Meaning of work: Finds his/her identity through achievements in the workplace. Keeps one eye on deadlines and goals and evaluates the present in relation to its utility in moving toward the future. Is rarely satisfied with achievements, always focusing on the next. Endorses ethic of "no pain, no gain."

Orientation Toward Human Relationships

Individual:

Assumption: Each person is responsible for what happens in his or her life and must watch out for his or her own rights and welfare.

Finds meaning in: Personal accountability, values competition.

Meaning of work: Work is a place to be recognized for one's own achievements. Upward mobility and other forms of personal recognition are expected and valued. Group goals, rewards, and achievements are not as satisfying.

Ranked:

Assumptions: Each of us has his or her own place, and respect is due according to one's position.

Finds meaning in: Tradition, hierarchy, family, protocol.

Meaning of work: Work is a place to enhance or strengthen, but not necessarily advance, one's social position. Protocol is seen as maintaining the weave of the social fabric. There is a higher value placed on being respectful than on being frank.

Handout B continued

Mutual:

Assumption: My purpose is to make a contribution to the larger whole.

Finds meaning in: Interdependence, group goals, affiliation.

Meaning of work: Work is a place to make a contribution to a group effort. The mutual individual needs to have a sense of belonging to projects and to see the connection to a larger goal or effort. Public praise and competition among or comparison to others may cause embarrassment.

Handout C

Field Assignment #4 Exploring Differences and Self-Knowledge

Sometime before the next session and after you've assessed your orientation to Activity, Time, and Human Relationships, find another AmeriCorps member and discuss the following:

1. For each approach which reflects your highest total, ask:
 - a) Is it an accurate description of yourself? If yes, what are some qualities you like about having this approach? If no, why not?
 - b) What are some of the qualities of this approach that you find challenging?
2. For each of the nine approaches, think of an example, e.g., a profession or a - service-related task, when using this approach would be an asset.
3. For each approach, think of an example when using it would be a challenge or disadvantage.
4. Refer to your scoring sheet. The highest number is your preferred approach; the lowest number represents the approach most unlike your own. Under each of the three categories of Activity, Time, and Human Relationships, develop strategies you could use if you were working on a project with a person whose approach was most unlike yours.

Handout D

The Learning Store, Session 4

In order to help us better serve your learning needs, and to help you reinforce your own learning, please take a few minutes and thoughtfully answer the following questions about today's session. Please give this completed form to your facilitator. Thanks very much for your input.

Name:

1. Please list at least three things you learned or relearned today that you think will come in handy.
2. What did you find the most useful in the Field Assignment?
3. Was there anything you found less useful in today's session? If so, what was it?
4. What did you especially like about today's session?
5. What aspect(s) of this session could be changed to make it better in the future?

SESSION 5

SERVICE AS A PROFESSION: IS IT FOR YOU?

Purposes

- To increase AmeriCorps members' knowledge of the goals and activities of at least four community organizations.
- To learn from a panel of professionals how their interests and backgrounds led them to community service.
- To provide opportunities for members to network with community-service professionals. To motivate members to consider life-long community service – either as a volunteer or a full-time professional - by hearing success stories from the field.
- To conduct at least one career-oriented informational interview.