

Interfaith Perspectives on Service

Bridging Beliefs and Action

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

Overview:

In this workshop, participants have the opportunity to reflect on and voice their values; engage with each other; and act together in the spirit of interfaith beliefs and service. This workshop will also bring diverse voices together to discuss the kind of change they want to see in the world and what inspires them to act on those issues. After establishing safe space guidelines, participants engage in a concentric circle exercise, where questions will start off simple, and then progress to questions with a focus on personal backgrounds and beliefs, as well as how those personal experiences motivate them to work together for the common good. Participants culminate the session with an activity where they can apply the skills and knowledge gained to a service project. This workshop promotes spiritual exploration as well as reflection skills and empathy.

Category:

Diversity, Communication, Engagement, Reflection, Expression, Understanding, Spiritual Exploration, Interfaith, Service

Level:

Applicable towards all students that have an interest in exploring the reason behind why others serve and explore the ties of spirituality with a person's service work. It may be especially useful for a workshop with student leaders




**Suitable for all
levels**

who are involved in planning a campus-wide service project.

Recommended

Bonner Sequence: This training is recommended for Bonner Students during an all Bonner training, as part of the Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 model, Stage 2: Understanding.

Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 Student Developmental Model			
Stage 1: Exposure	Stage 2: Understanding	Stage 3: Application and Discussion	Stage 4: Adaptation
			

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Participants will practice safe space rules and practice having an open mind towards others' motivations for serving.
- Participants will reflect upon their personal beliefs and what motivates their peers to engage in service.
- Participants will understand the importance of focusing on similarities in order to maximize empathy.

Materials:

- Computer
- Projector
- Emaze Presentation
- Microphone if necessary
- Safe Space Norms for Dialogue Handout
- Ways to Make a Service Project Interfaith Handout

Link to the Emaze Presentation → <http://www.emaze.com/@AORRCQFOR/landscape-art20th>

Link to video → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilKvw5lpbfl&feature=youtu.be>

How to Prepare:

Review the trainer guide. Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the work of the Interfaith Youth Corps by visiting their website at: <https://www.ifyc.org/>. Go through the Emaze presentation and become familiar with the content that is in the presentation. Become familiar with the safe space guide in order to establish a safe space within the workshop. Prepare the handouts and other materials for the workshop and pass them out before starting the workshop. Review and modify the workshop to fit the size of participants. Please note that if the hyperlinks do not work, the links are posted in the materials section so that they may be copied and pasted into the internet search bar.

Brief Outline:

This workshop is organized around leading participants through an engaging discussion about interfaith and service. The goal is that participants will be able to identify similarities between their personal motivations to serve and their peers' motivations with an emphasis on faith. It is important to encourage the participants to speak truthfully and comfortably do to the establishment of safe space.

The outline for this 60-70 minute workshop has the following parts:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Safe Space Norms | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 2) IFYC and Better Together | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 3) Concentric Circles Discussion | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 4) Making a Service Project Interfaith | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 5) Reflection/Debriefing | suggested time 10 minutes |

If you only have an hour, select how to modify the activities, possibly by reducing the time of project planning (activity 4).

Part 1) Safe Space Norms

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Create a safe space by listing the safe space norms for dialogue and elaborating on each norm. Emphasize that **all** participants who are involved in the workshop are required to abide by the safe space norms in order to insure that everyone is comfortable with what will be shared during this workshop. The norms can be found on the handout with more detail.

Safe Space Norms for Dialogue:

- Make "I" statements
- Be aware of non-verbal expressions
- "Seek first to understand, then to be understood"
- "Tell me more..."
- Respect Different Opinions
- Silence is O.K.
- What is said in groups, stays in groups
- Encourage participation
- Say "Ouch"

Note: If the facilitator or participants feel there are norms missing, then feel free to add them.

Part 2) IFYC and Better Together

Suggested time: 10 minutes

This session draws in part on the work of the Interfaith Youth Core, a national nonprofit organization that helps colleges and universities to create and implement service projects in an interfaith tradition. First, provide an introduction to Eboo Patel, the founder to Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) and the inspiration that led him to starting up IFYC.

Slides 2-3 are made for the intro and inspiration.

"Eboo Patel founded Interfaith Youth Core on the idea that religion should be a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division. He was inspired to build this bridge based on his experiences identifying as an American Muslim and navigating a religiously diverse social landscape. For over fifteen years, he has worked with governments, social sector organizations, and colleges and universities to help make interfaith cooperation a social norm. Named by US News & World Report as one of America's Best Leaders of 2009, Eboo served on President Obama's Inaugural Faith Council and is the author of Acts of Faith, Sacred Ground and the new Interfaith Leadership: A Primer. He holds a doctorate in the sociology of religion from Oxford University, where he studied on a Rhodes scholarship."

After introducing Eboo, define **"interfaith" and "interfaith dialogue."** (slide 4-5)

Interfaith → relating to to between different religions or members of different religions.

Interfaith Dialogue → cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e., “faiths”) and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs at both the individual and institutional levels.

Then introduce the Better Together Campaign Strategies that could be adapted to the Bonner community, and explain how Bonner Programs tend to function in these three strategies.

Script: “Now we are going to discuss the Better Together Campaign Strategies and how these strategies coincide with the Bonner model. Feel free to share any examples of your own that would fit the strategies (ex. As a Bonner student I have adapted the skills to express my voice and take up leadership positions).”

Please note: the slides discuss Better Together Campaign Strategy first and then below each are how they coincide with the Bonner model. This part of the training is to show that Bonners can come together through a common goal like the Better Together Campaign.

Slides 6-8 are made for the Better Together Campaign Strategies:

1. **Strong Voice, Engage, and Act (BTC)** → These are three big ideas that when put into action, have the potential to create real change on campus and in peoples’ lives. We know that building interfaith cooperation requires a lot of effort to create space for people to build meaningful relationships and learn about different faith and philosophical traditions.

Strong Voice, Engage, and Act (BP) → The students in the Bonner Program should be able to create real change within their campus and their community.

2. **Effective Mobilization (BTC)** → Build a movement on campus and making mobilization a priority.

Effective Mobilization (BP) → Being able to come together as a cohort and establishing a supportive environment towards the encouragement of an event or service project.

3. **Committed Campaign Leadership with Staff/Faculty Support (BTC)** → Any successful movement requires committed leadership. The success and sustainability of your campaign depends on the quality of your leadership structure.

Committed Campaign Leadership with Staff/Faculty Support (BP) →

Bonner directors and coordinators should be committed to their Bonners, and Bonners shouldn't be afraid to receive a listening ear or support from them.

Part 3) Concentric Circles Discussion

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Slides 9-19 are made to display questions for this activity.

Allow the participants to partner with someone. Once all of the participants have a partner, ask them to decide amongst themselves who will be a '1' and who will be a '2'. Then, tell participants to form two concentric circles (which 1s are the inner circle and the 2s are in the outer circle. Ask the first question, and give the pairs 3-4 minutes to discuss. Then, rotate the 2s to the right every 5 minutes, asking a new question every time. The questions are already made and are on Emaze.

1. What is your favorite movie? Why? **(slide 10)**
2. Where was the last place you traveled to? How did you feel about your experience? **(slide 11)**
3. What is your favorite food and/or drink? Why? **(slide 12)**
4. What is your favorite hobby? What gave you the passion to pursue it? **(slide 13)**
5. What is your favorite holiday? Why? **(slide 14)**
6. What motivates you to serve? **(slide 15)**
7. What is an issue that matters to you or to your community? Does or has that issue impacted you personally? **(slide 16)**
8. Is there anything in your religious, philosophical, or personal background that inspires you to take action on an issue? **(slide 17)**
9. What does true interfaith experience look like to you? **(slide 18)**
10. Why is it important for interfaith dialogue to be present in service? **(slide 19)**

Part 4) Making a Service Project Interfaith

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Slide 20-21 is made to show the video and discussion to follow.

Now break the circles up and ask the participants to talk to someone they didn't talk to in the circle about something they learned, something they found inspiring, or even just to finish a conversation from a previous question. Allow 5 minutes for participants to do this. Once they are done they may return to their seats and wait for further instructions.

Instruct participants to take notes on the handout and inform them to be ready to share out some ideas that they may have. Continue the workshop by playing the video "4 Ways to Makes a Service Project Interfaith".

Link to the video → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilKvw5lpbfl&feature=youtu.be>

Part 5) Reflection/Debriefing

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Then, bring the group back together for a reflection and discuss:

- What do you think was the purpose of this activity? (ex. in order to see how similar people are even though they could appear different on the outside)
- What was possibly something new you can take away from this activity?
- How can this activity be used or adapted within the service site or on the college campus?
- How does this relate to interfaith and service?

Credits:

- Developed in 2017 by Baneen Al-Akashi, Bonner at Allegheny College
- "IFYC." *IFYC*. Interfaith Youth Core, n.d. Web. 12 July 2017.
- InterfaithYouthCore. "The Update - 4 Ways to Make a Service Project Interfaith." *YouTube*. YouTube, 12 May 2014. Web. 12 July 2017.
- "LANDSCAPE ART20th." *Emaze presentations*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 July 2017.

Followed by Handouts:

- Safe Space Norms Handout (pages 8)
- 4 Ways to Make a Service Project Interfaith Handout (page 9)

Other Resources:

<https://www.ifyc.org/sites/default/files/BT%20Strats-5%20%281%29.pdf>

This resource gives a more in detail description of the 3 key Better Together Strategies and resources that will interest anyone who wants to take initiative to start a campaign on their campus.

<https://www.ifyc.org/resources>

This resource is for anyone who is interested in interfaith work or anyone who is looking for trainings, workshops, or resources that will support students, faculty, and staff or administration. There is a variety of content that can be looked and and used, so feel free to look around.



Safe Space Norms for Dialogue

Make "I" Statements

Phrases like "I think" or "I feel" or "in my experience" can prevent another person from feeling attacked by your comments.

Be aware of non-verbal expressions

Our body speaks volumes. Give some thought to how what you are "saying" affects others.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood"

In other words, be open and listen generously-put aside thoughts of what you want to say next.

"Tell me more..."

Ask clarifying questions. Probe gently to understand a viewpoint different from your own. Find out how people arrive at their opinions, not just what their opinions are.

Silence is O.K.

There are lots of ways to participate. Actively listening or listening closely can be one form of participation.

Respect Different Opinions

Be open to conflicting viewpoints and do your best to make this a safe space for each other.

What is Said in Groups, Stays in Groups

Psychological safety comes from knowing that our comments won't be repeated elsewhere or attributed in another context. In other words, take the learning and leave the names.

Encourage participation

Please allow everyone to speak. Try not to monopolize the conversation.

Say "Ouch"

If you feel that a comment might be hurtful; be prepared to gently explain how you understand a comment to be painful.



4 Ways to Make a Service Project Interfaith

This handout describes 4 strategies to create an educational and informative service project, guided by principles of effective interfaith practice. It is characterized by getting to know the people you are serving with and creating a welcoming environment for all voices to be heard.

1. **It's Intentionally Interfaith:** when trying to plan an interfaith service project be intentional in *advertising, outreach, and language during the event* so that participants are aware that they will possibly be asked about their religious or non-religious identity
2. **Setting Safe Space Rules:** establish a safe space setting in order for participants to feel comfortable and welcomed. It should be about shared values and not about shared theological tenets (which are opinions held as part of a religion). Participants should feel safe to express their opinions about values without retribution.
3. **Participants Have Multiple Ways to Voice Their Values:** Find creative and interactive ways for people to voice their values. This can be done by:
 - Hanging up a sheet of paper and asking participants to write what inspires them to serve from their tradition.
 - Share some quotes about an issue and ask people to reflect.
 - Having a few people share their interfaith story.
4. **It's Not Just a Dialogue:** intentionally structure the event so that people are engaging across lines of religious difference. This can be done by:
 - Having a conversation couch where participants can meet new friends.
 - Ask questions during the event so people will engage with other participants, after, or during the event.
 - Intentionally assign groups so that people don't stick to who they know.