



ACTIVITY

The Values of Belonging

Materials Needed

- 10 small cards (or pieces of paper) for each participant
- 1 piece of paper (letter-size or A4) for each participant
- 2 different colored markers for each participant

Time Needed

30-60 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the amount of time you want to give to group discussion.

Goal

This activity aims to examine attitudes of participants towards the idea of belonging to the wider Jewish community. Is it a positive or negative experience for them? Is it a meaningful or meaningless part of their identity?

Directions for Activity

1. Each member of the group is given a series of ten cards. On each card they write one description that defines their belonging to a group. (They have ten cards so can write up to ten aspects.) One card needs to be “a Jew.” For example they might write a list that includes some of the following:
 - A Woman
 - A Daughter
 - A Sister
 - A Granddaughter
 - A Student at School
 - A Believer in Human Rights
 - A Canadian/American Etc.
 - A Member of 11th Grade
 - A Basketball Player
 - A Guitar Player
 - A Dancer
 - A Jew
 - A Human Being
 - An Environmentalist
 - A Reader
2. After finishing writing on the cards, each student divides his/her cards into two piles, labeled “very meaningful” and “fairly meaningful.” If there are any descriptions that are even less meaningful, they can add a third category, “not very meaningful.” They decide which group the “Jew” card goes but will not touch this card in the next part of the activity.
3. Starting with the less meaningful cards, the participants take each card (apart from the “Jew” card) and write what being a member of that group means to them. For example, what does it mean to them to be a dancer and to be a member of the community of people who define themselves as dancers? What does it give them? How important is it in their life? Why? Do they feel connected to others who define themselves as dancers?
4. Let each person present one of their “very meaningful” cards (but not the Jew card) to the whole group and see if other people feel similarly to them.
5. Working again as individuals, let each take their “Jew card” and stick it on a larger piece of paper. Around the edge of the circle the participant writes single words or phrases of her or his feelings, positive and negative, towards the word Jew in the center. They might, for example, write some of the following words: positive words such as “belonging” or “connected” or negative words such as “parents’ pressure” or “boring” or words like “bar (or bat) mitzvah” or “Hebrew school” which could be either positive or negative.

6. When they have written all the words or phrases around the circle, they take two different colored markers and draw arrows connecting the words to the circle. If the words express a positive feeling or value that draws them in towards their community they should express this by means of an arrow in one color pointing inwards towards the circle. If the word represents something negative or something that draws them away from the community, they should draw an arrow in the other color, away from the circle. The more important the factor (in either direction), the bigger the arrow should be drawn.
7. When finished, divide students into pairs and ask them to compare their diagrams. How many of the factors appear in both of the participants' diagrams? Are there things that appear as positive in one person's diagram and as negative in the other? have them talk about the different factors. Which are stronger, the positive or the negative? Which if any factors are negative?
8. Back in the whole group, the students discuss and list all the factors that came up. Make two lists made, one for the positive and one for the negative factors.
9. Divide the class into small groups and on based on the list lists, have each group attempt to summarize the feelings of the class as a whole towards the Jewish community, and have them try to express this in a statement. The statement should include a general outline of the position of the class, explaining any significant minority positions that developed, and it should also include any suggestions of the small group for improving the Jewish community.
10. Finally, have each individual tell which pile they put their "Jew card," very meaningful, fairly meaningful or not meaningful, and ask them to explain their position.