

# Defining Reflection

Reflection is the key to service learning. It's what makes service learning different from community service, because it is the part of the process where volunteers take the experience and examine it for lessons learned, skills gained, and application to the future.

Reflection should take place throughout the service process and continually guide youth to look at the service experience, what it means to him/her personally and to the community, and how s/he will use the knowledge and skills gained through the experience.

Reflection activities should be varied to suit the interests and abilities of the participants, but they should always help volunteers answer three main questions:

*"Reflection is the act of reviewing events with an eye to extracting meaning."*

*~ Suzanne Goldsmith*

## **What?**

Look back on the experience:

What did I do? What did I see, touch, smell? What did I experience for the first time? How did the experience make me feel? How did I deal with those feelings? What funny, serious, planned, unplanned things happened?

## **So what?**

Interpret the experience:

What did the service mean to me? Why was it important? What did I learn from the experience—about myself, about the world, about a life skill, about particular subject matter? What is the reality of this situation? What are the connections between what I saw and the reasons for larger social issues? What is being done to deal with the problem and its causes?

## **Now what?**

Explore the possibilities for change and get ready for the next time:

What can/will I do with what I learned? How will I use the skills and knowledge to continue to meet this or other community needs? How can I continue to be involved in the community? What should our next project be?

*Source: Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators and National Dropout Prevention's Reflection: A Guide to Effective Service Learning, and Search Institute's An Asset Builder's Guide to Effective Service Learning*

# Reflection Ideas

- Using Play-dough, describe what you have learned from the project.
- **Pile:** Have each person select an object from the pile and tell how the project (or what they have learned from the project) is like the object. Examples include light bulb, ball, rubber band, toothpick, candy, spices, toys, pens, q-tips, cotton ball, penny, etc.
- Draw a cartoon that shows what you have gained from the project
- Write a poem describing what skills you gained from the project.
- Create and perform a dance that reflects your experience during the project.
- Create a song describing what you learned from your experience during the project.
- Using the **KWL Chart**, list 5 things that you know about the project, 5 things you wanted to learn from the project, and 5 things you have learned from the project. (See attached sheet.)
- Apply the **Debrief Wheel** to the project. (See attached sheet.)
- Create bookmarks with pictures, written reflections, funny memories, or quotes about your service experience.
- **Quick Snap:** Using your bodies to pose for still pictures, show “Polaroid snapshots” of your service project. Show what happened, what you remember, what you enjoyed most, what you plan on doing differently, etc.
- **Word/Sentence Reflection:** Write one word associated with the project. Write the word in capital letters going down the page. Pass the paper to the person on your left and have that person write a sentence that begins with the next letter of the original word and that expresses his/her feelings about the subject

Source: AmeriCorps\*NCCC, “Reflection: The Key to Service-learning,” 2003 National Service-learning Conference

# More Reflection Ideas

- **Acting Out:** Give participants time to think about their answer to a reflection question; then have them act out their answer while the others guess what they're trying to convey. Debrief by allowing them time to ask each other questions to clarify or expand on their thoughts, feelings, and insights.
- **Tree Reflection:** Have each person draw a tree on a sheet of paper. Have them label the roots as the values, people, beliefs that influence them; the bark as issues/causes they are passionate about; and the branches as steps they will take to act on these passions or address the needs they identified. After everyone is done drawing, discuss by sharing your trees and how these different areas will help you in your service. (This is also a great way to “community map” based on participant interest.)
- **Guided Imagery:** (This activity is great either before or after a project!) Have volunteers get comfortable, close their eyes, and listen to a story. The leader should get creative and lead the group through a narrative of the day. Describe what is happening and the people there. Ask the volunteers what they're experiencing by being there.

*Example: "Today you are going to serve meals to people who are homeless. Picture yourself arriving at the shelter. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear?"*

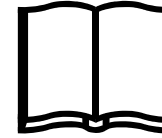
If you are using this activity after the service, use actual events to get participants thinking about what they experienced.

*Example: "We are walking into the nursing home in the morning. The patients are gathered in the community room. Who do you see? What are they doing? What do you smell? What do you feel? What are their reactions?"*

- **Group Banners:** If you do service projects in teams or have students participate in the same service activity, break group into teams or small groups. Supply each team with a piece of banner paper and markers and ask them to depict their experience using a combination of words and pictures. Give them about 10 - 15 minutes. When completed, ask each group to share their banner with the whole group. Use their banners as a jumping off point for processing the experience.

Source: Center for Asset Development

# KWL Chart

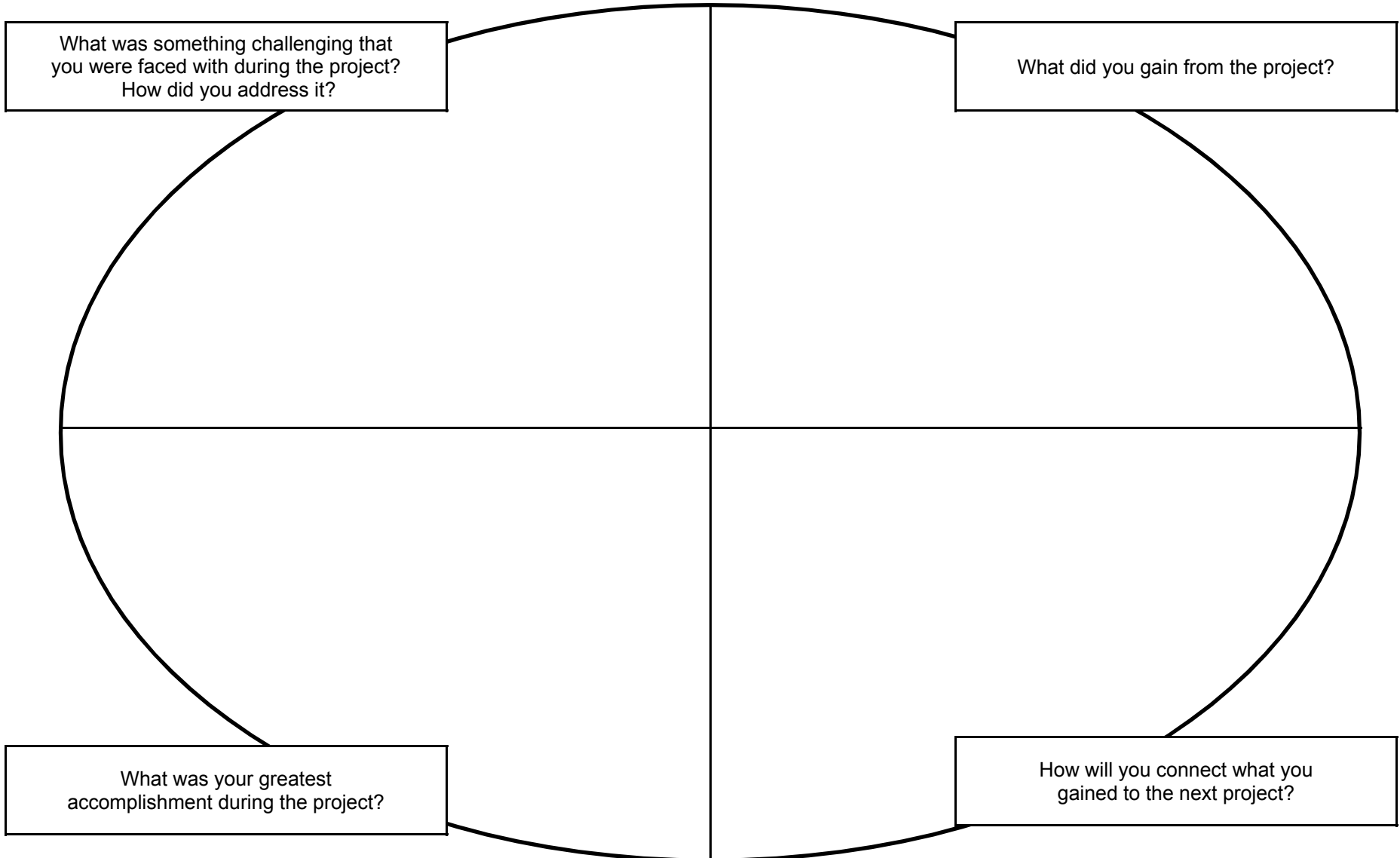


<b>KNOW</b> What you already know	<b>WHAT</b> What you would like to learn	<b>LEARNED</b> What you have learned

Source: AmeriCorps\*NCCC, "Reflection: The Key to Service-learning," 2003 National Service-learning Conference

# The Debrief Wheel

Allow everyone 15 minutes to complete the questions. Then, take 20 minutes to discuss individual answers and how those answers may apply to the rest of the group. Make sure to have a recorder for the larger group discussion and a timekeeper.



What was something challenging that you were faced with during the project?  
How did you address it?

What did you gain from the project?

What was your greatest accomplishment during the project?

How will you connect what you gained to the next project?

Source: AmeriCorps\*NCCC, "Reflection: The Key to Service-learning," 2003 National Service-learning Conference



# Reflection Questions

Below are some questions to use in facilitating the “Debrief Wheel” or other reflection exercises. Adapt the questions to fit specific situations and projects.

- How was the community changed as a result of our project?
- What surprises have you or the group encountered?
- What were the members not prepared for?
- What have been pleasant surprises?
- Does the team/leader need to make any changes in their working methods?
- Is the member/team meeting the goals for the project?
- Is the member/team making sufficient progress toward these various goals?
- What skills are members learning?
- What issues relating to the project need discussing?
- Do we need to arrange for supplemental training or a speaker to address interests or issues relating to the project?
- What is the most rewarding, challenging, most important, and most difficult part about this project?
- What other projects can address this community issue/need?
- Have members come up with a question of their own for the team to answer.

*Adapted from materials presented by AmeriCorps\*NCCC, “Reflection: The Key to Service-learning,” 2003 National Service-learning Conference*

A different world cannot be built by indifferent people.

~ *Horace Mann*  
*Philosopher*

If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

~ *Martin Luther King, Jr.*  
*Minister, Civil Rights Leader*

I believe that the serving and being served are reciprocal and that one cannot really be one without the other.

~ *Robert Greenleaf*  
*Educator and Writer*

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

~ *Margaret Mead*  
*Anthropologist*

We don't see things as they are; we see things as we are.

~ *Cicero*  
*Philosopher*

One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don't come home at night.

~ *Margaret Mead*  
*Anthropologist*

Unless you choose to do great things with it, it makes no difference how much you are rewarded or how much power you have.

~ *Oprah Winfrey*  
*Talk Show Host, Actor, Producer*

I change myself,  
I change the world.

~ *Gloria Ansaldua*  
*Writer*

Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.

~ *William Butler Yeats*  
*Poet*

Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or by emotional appeal.

~ *Marilyn Ferguson*  
*Educator and Writer*

Most Americans have never seen the ignorance, degradation, hunger, sickness, and futility in which many other Americans live. . . . They won't become involved in economic or political change until something brings the seriousness of the situation home to them.

~ *Shirley Chisholm*  
*Congresswoman*

Those of us who attempt to do things for others or for the world without deepening our own sense of self-understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others.

~ *Robert Greenleaf*  
*Educator and Writer*

I believe we should fight for the unrealistic, rather than defend the unacceptable.

~ *Bill Shore*  
*Founder of Share Our Strength,  
a hunger organization*

Everything has changed except our way of thinking.

~ *Albert Einstein*  
*Physicist*

We do not learn from what we do. We learn from thinking about what we do.

~ *Anonymous*

We can only serve that which we are profoundly connected to.

~ *Sam Daly-Harris*

We are a landscape of all we have seen.

~ *Isamu Noguchi*

The horizon leans forward,  
Offering you space to place  
new steps of change.

~ *Maya Angelou, from  
"On the Pulse of the Morning"*