



ANOTHER OR AN “OTHER”?

HOW CAN I RELATE WITH OTHERS IF I’VE NEVER HAD THEIR EXPERIENCE?

PREP FOR THE SESSION

Overview

This resource explores the issue of “**Otherness**” in our **volunteer service**, through the value of **Sanctity**.

At-a-Glance:

Through an exploration of the value of sanctity, this resource examines how we can relate to others in circumstances where we’ve never had their experience. It guides us towards thinking about how we can relate to those different from us by accessing our universal, shared, human experiences, while simultaneously honoring the particular differences between our lived experiences. This exploration will guide participants to reflect on questions such as: What and whom do I hold to be sacred? How do I operate when in sacred time, place, or relationship?

The resource is designed to be facilitated in sections, with a break in between for the service activity. Prior to the service activity, a question will be posed to learners to consider during their service. After service, they will have an opportunity for reflection and processing.



Time Estimate:

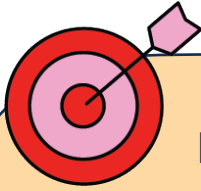
30 minutes



Best Uses:

- To be paired with a service experience
- For young adult and adult learners

LET'S GET STARTED



FRAME THE ISSUE

Facilitator reads the following for context:

“Otherness defines people based on how they differ from the group we see as ‘us’” ([Institute for the Future of Education](#)). This can be enriching for everyone, if we see differences as complementary and a path towards being in relationship. On the flip side, the act of “othering” can be damaging and invalidate the particulars of the experiences of others. When we believe someone to be “the other” rather than “another” one of us we are both acknowledging differences and simultaneously establishing a relational distance. Engaging with someone as “another [one of us]” despite what might be vastly different life experiences, fosters relational building.

Facilitator prompts the group:

- Think of people with whom you’ve had recent interactions. What distinguished those who felt like an “another” from those who felt “other?”
- How do you engage differently with “others”?

5 min





EXPLORE THE VALUE: SANCTITY

Facilitator reads to the group:

Sanctity, or holding something to be sacred, shows up in our relationships with time, people, objects and places. When we hold something to be sacred we operate differently within that relationship. It is special to us and set apart in a way that allows it to maintain its uniqueness. We might keep to a favorite ritual only on specific occasions, or wear a favorite article of clothing only for special events. We are both in relationship with that which we hold to be sacred and yet at the same time uphold it with deliberate separateness.



Facilitator prompts the group:

- What times, places, and interpersonal relationships are sacred to you?
- How would you describe the ways in which you connect or relate to those you hold sacred? How would you describe the distance, or separation, between you?

6 min



6 min



JEWISH ANCHOR

Facilitator reads to the group:

Jewish texts teach us that all humans are created *B'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of the Divine. (*Breishit/Genesis 1:27*).

But what does that actually mean for us? Isn't the Divine something so distant, separate and sacred? How can it also be proximate and part of us each and every one of us? What responsibilities flow as a result of this? How do we see the Divine in others? In ourselves?

Leading Jewish thinker Rabbi Art Green, PhD in his book ***Seek My Face***, elaborates on the responsibility that flows from being created *B'tzelem Elokim*.

Read the text below and answer the prompts that follow:

Rabbi Green writes: "The inner drive to imitate the ever-giving source of life [the Divine] calls forth in us an unceasing flow of love, generosity of spirit, and full acceptance, both of ourselves and of all God's creatures."

Commenting on that line, writer and Jewish leader Dr. Erica Brown adds:

"In the ideal sense, if we truly believe we are all created in God's image we have to recognize everyone around us at all times. Perhaps this explains the saying from *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) that we are to greet everyone with a pleasant face. We shine upon others in order to help others shine and to validate their sense of self-worth. The worth of a person is not transactional; who are you that I should pay attention to you? The better question to ask when we withhold our attentions is: Who am I that I should ignore you?" (From [My Jewish Learning](#).)

Facilitator prompts the group:

- According to this text, when are we considered to be acting in the image of the Divine?
- Which differences between yourself and another do you uphold with sanctity? Which are just separate but not upheld?
- What is challenging about upholding "the other" with sanctity?

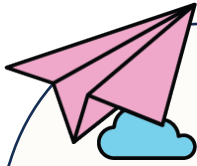


*** PROMPT BEFORE SERVICE ***

In the distance between how we experience “another” – who is like us – from an “other” is the opportunity to access sanctity.

As we enter this service experience, notice what people or which of their experiences might feel “other” to you. Then, as you seek to honor that which is sacred within them, consider under what circumstances it is best to relate or connect with their experiences vs. when it is best to differentiate and uphold the separateness.

BREAK FOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE



PROMPT ACTION

7 min



Facilitator reads to the group:

With a partner, reflect back on a moment in your service today when you noticed an “other.”

- Share what about that person or their lived experiences felt “other” to you.
- Each partner answer: on a scale of 1 to 10, rank to what extent (10 being the highest, 1 the lowest) – you treated that which you experienced as “other” in the same way that you treat that which you hold to be sacred.

Ranking: _____

- Then reflect, why not higher? Why not lower?
- Complete this sentence, in order to uphold the differences I see in others as sacred, I can _____.



CLOSE WITH INTENTION

2 min



Facilitator reads:

Today’s program prompted us to think about how we treat those people and experiences we perceive to be as different, or “other” than our own. To exercise the value of sanctity, we need to simultaneously stay in relationship with the “other” and uphold their differences with deliberate separation.



Facilitator prompts:

- Share one visual image that you are leaving with today that can help you uphold differences in others as sacred.