

Skills For Dialogue, Sixth Form – Student Workshops

Workshop 7

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES – CRITICAL THINKING & MY BIASES



**The
Faith
& Belief
Forum**



Aim of the workshops

- To open up a space for students to experience dialogue and put into practice some of the principles explored in previous workshops.
- To encourage looking inwards and thinking about biases that each person may carry. Questioning where they source their information and the risks of 'echo chambers' that reinforce their own views without presenting 'other' views or experiences.

Resources needed

- PowerPoint 7
- List of Issues, to be cut up and put into envelope, one per group of five to six students.
- Paper (two per student)
- Pens
- 'Views on Religion' handout, one for each pair of students

How to adapt workshop content

- Prior to the workshop, look out for news articles / blogs / social media content that could be used as an alternative to the handout. There may have been some conversations in class that could be used as a source allowing students space to dialogue about relevant topics.
- Be aware of any underlying or strong opinions, we of course want these topics to be controversial and it can be daunting to think about how to manage strong opinions. Refer to RADIO principles, remind students that they can use 'Ooops & Ouch'. You can model this by intervening when you hear something that may be offensive to students and ask students to rephrase in a way that would be respectful of other viewpoints.
- Refer back to RSVP & REPLY principles. This is a great opportunity to practice these again.
- Have RADIO, RSVP & REPLY printed up on a board / written on flip chart to remind students to use these tools.

Running time

45 minutes

Workshop 7: Controversial Issues – Critical Thinking & My Biases

TIMINGS	NAME & AIM	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
3 mins	Introduction	Talk through agenda outline.	
15 mins	Activity: Opinion Spectrum	<p>Ask students to place each of the list items into a pile of 'YES', 'NO' or 'MAYBE' depending on whether they feel that the issue is controversial.</p> <p>List of Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The global legalisation of abortion• The legalisation of Cannabis in the UK• Rising secularism in the UK• Plant-based dieting• Revoking citizenship of those involved in foreign terrorism• Positive discrimination mechanisms• Global nuclear disarmament• The existence of Covid-19• Gender pay gap in UK sports• Global warming	List of Issues, to be cut up and put into envelope, one per group of five to six students.

TIMINGS	NAME & AIM	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
		<p>Reflection</p> <p>Ask students to reflect on the following questions in pairs (they can write down their answers as they will be asked to feedback):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do these issues have in common? • How do they make us feel? • What makes them challenging? • How / when do we engage? <p>Whole group feedback</p> <p>Some of the points about controversial issues which may have arisen during your discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They divide opinion and sometimes communities. • They are complex and can spark heated debate. • They can evoke emotional reactions and be difficult to talk about. • They can become taboo. 	

TIMINGS	NAME & AIM	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
15 mins	<p>The Role of Religion – Does religion divide or unite people?</p> <p>(Teachers can come up with their own controversial question.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information surrounding them can be subject to control or exaggeration, etc. • They can be subject to time and geographical context, demographic, etc. <p>Individual task</p> <p>Answer the following questions on your paper in relation to the question above (this is a good activity to do to understand your own thoughts and beliefs are around any topic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe... • My relevant values to this belief are... • The life experience that has given rise to this belief is... • The ways in which I practice this believe are... • This belief is likely to make me... • The emotions that I feel in relation to this belief are... <p>Keep these in mind during the activity and remind students of the last session's activities (Identity Cupboard & Matryoshka Dolls).</p>	<p>Blank paper (one per student)</p> <p>Pens</p> <p>'Views on Religion' handout, one for each pair of students</p>

TIMINGS	NAME & AIM	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
		<p>Pairs</p> <p>Ask your students to get into pairs or three and work together through the ‘Views on Religion’ handout.</p> <p>They will have to take each source in turn and discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of this opinion? • What part of this is factual? Which parts can we fact-check? • Is there any bias here? Why / where / how? • Is any of their language harmful? • How does this match what you usually hear? • They can make notes on the handout or on corresponding paper. 	

TIMINGS	NAME & AIM	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
10 mins	My Biases	<p>Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for feedback from each group – a general summary of how hard / easy they found that task. • What stood out the most for them? For example, the language being used? The use of facts? How easy was it to recognise bias? • How did you feel when discussing this topic? Emotions check-in (write down a list of the emotions that you may have felt during this activity). <p>Individual Task</p> <p>Using the ‘Views on Religion’ handout, answer the following questions about your biases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 What sources of information are in my comfort zone / do I instinctively get pulled into? 2 What sources of information make me feel uncomfortable / make me instinctively recoil? 3 What kind of language is appealing to me? Unappealing? 	<p>Blank paper (one per student)</p> <p>Pens</p> <p>‘Views on Religion’ handout, one for each pair of students</p>

TIMINGS	NAME & AIM	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
3 mins	Summary & close	<p>4 What kind of imagery is appealing to me? Unappealing?</p> <p>5 What kind of people do I like to agree with? Disagree with?</p> <p>6 How often do I look for information that supports my opinions?</p> <p>7 How often do I look for information that contradicts my opinions?</p>	