



Spirituality, activism and me

Purpose

To open up exploration about what we think spirituality is and its relationship with activism. Like all opening up activities, this needs to be followed by sessions that invite participants to find ways of applying their learning.

Time

60 minutes

Materials

Flipchart, pens

Related tools

Connecting the inner and outer

Preparation

“Spirituality” or other similar words may not be a positive for everyone, so research the group beforehand on what responses to particular words might be, and consider alternatives, eg how our inner values inform our outer work. Like many activities that go deep, this is more meaningful if it already connects with you as facilitator. In preparing to run this, ask yourself ‘how would I answer that?’

You might want to invite participants to bring a small object (or picture or word or ...) which symbolises their inner values which they feel comfortable sharing. It’s fine too if they’d rather not.

Description

Go-round:

- If you’ve invited participants to bring an object/image/word then use this space for them to share briefly how it connects them to their inner values and spirituality.
- If not, ask what does the word spirituality evoke for me? Responses in one breath.

You might want to start.

Invite participants to use the language they are comfortable with. People respond differently to some concepts and words around spirituality, so choose your language according to how you read the group. You can adapt this question according to the group, for example: What does morality mean to you? What does the phrase ‘inner values’ mean to you?





After the go-round, invite participants to form pairs and ask them to consider the following question:

What connections do I see between my spirituality and my activism?

Ask everyone to reflect individually on their response in silence for two minutes. Then share with their partner. Allow enough time for both to share.

Debrief

How was that? What came up that you'd like to share?
Write up words/ key themes on the flip sheets.

Typical responses might include:

Spirituality as a resource/ journey/ inspiration to draw on/ gain strength from/ search for meaning/ how we relate to the "opponent"/ a greater force - loving and positive/ outer actions flow from an inner "truth"/ means and ends are inextricably linked/ we are deeply connected with all beings / the universe, suffering can deepen our wisdom/ shared humanity.

It may be that negative reactions to spirituality or activism come up. Try asking if anyone else feels that way? Why are you feeling the way you are? Think about it in pairs. This will take extra time but is vital.

Keep it fluid (but not so fluid that everyone is on different wavelengths) rather than giving a fixed definition. If the group has lots to say, you might ask them to go back to their pairs and discuss the responses. This will take extra time but is a useful way to explore the range of feelings and approaches.

So, what can we say about spirituality & activism? Write up.
How will this help me?

Reflect back and summarise what the group has said, including any divergent views.

