

A Model for Reflection: Four Steps

The reflection process is not haphazard. It is organized into a series of steps to help guide the process. We call these steps a *model for reflection*. There are four steps:

- 1: Discuss what happened.
- 2: Make a judgement.
- 3: Generalize the experience.
- 4: Set goals.

1: Discuss what happened:

Begin by directing open-ended questions towards specific incidents. For Example:

- A: Who can benefit from learning this particular principle?
- B: What was the major point he was building on?
- C: How can we implement this principle?

2: Make a judgement:

Next, ask the group to decide if what happened was good or bad. Try to focus on good things first. Direct attention to specific skills. For example, you might ask, “What was good about the way he/she presented the message to the group?” Then ask, “Was there anything that didn’t work as well?”

3: Generalize the experience:

Again, direct open-ended questions toward specific incidents. Try to get the group to see the connection between the presentation and their outdoor experiences. Ask, “How can we apply this to what we do in _____?” Be as specific as you can. “How can we use what we learned about this principle on our outdoor activities?” or you could ask, “How can we use what we learned about this principle to teach others about Tread Lightly or Leave No Trace?”

4: Set goals:

To bring the reflection process to a close, try to get group members to set goals based on what they have learned. Begin with a positive. Ask: “What skills did you use today that you’d like to keep using?” Then ask, “Do you need to change anything you are doing to set the proper example?”

Some Important Points:

- 1: The leader helps participants figure things out themselves rather than just telling them.
- 2: The leader guides more than directs.
- 3: The leader is more concerned with the individual.
- 4: Reflecting on an activity should take no more than 5 minutes.
- 5: The more you do it the easier it becomes for both you and the participants.

Emphasize the point that you are helping participants learn how to make sense of experiences, solve problems, make decisions, and work together, rather than letting them depend on others for all the answers.

Leading the Reflection:

1: Lay the ground rules for discussion.

Have participants sit so they can see each other. Have the group agree not to make fun of each other. Any participant is free to keep silent if they wish. There are to be no put-downs. Remember: there is no such thing as a stupid question or answer.

2: Facilitate the discussion.

As a leader, you should avoid the temptation to talk about your own experiences. Reserve judgement on what the participants say and avoid criticizing them. Help discussion get going, then let the participants take over with limited guidance from you. If you describe what you saw during the activity, be sure your comments don't stop the participants from adding their own thoughts. Facilitate means to make something easy. Your role is to make the discussion or reflection flow more smoothly.

3: Ask thought-provoking questions.

Open-ended questions: Avoid questions with “yes” or “no” answers. Use questions like “What was the purpose of learning this principle?” And “What did you learn about how you have done things in the past?” Open ended questions help participants think about their own ideas rather than relying on what they believe the leader wants to hear. Open ended questions also help participants take responsibility for their own behavior and learning.

Feeling questions: These types of questions require participants to reflect on how they feel about their own actions. For example: “How did you feel when you realized what you can do to improve the environment?” Feeling questions help participants talk about their true feelings with each other. People who can talk about their feelings are usually more sensitive to the needs of others. Feeling is a part of thinking. If you can understand your feelings you can generally think better.

Judgement questions: These questions ask participants to make decisions about things. For example: “What was the best part of the presentation?” or “What was the best idea that was shared?” Judgement questions help participants decide what is good or bad.

Guiding questions: Guiding questions steer participants toward the purpose of the activity and keep the discussion focused. For example: “What is the most important message you received related to this principle?” Guiding questions are important because they direct the discussion to specific issues.

Closing questions: Closing questions help participants draw conclusions and end the discussion. For example: “What did you learn?” or “What would you do differently?” Closing questions help participants set goals and make decisions.

Sample Questions:

How has this discussion changed the way you will treat the environment in the future?

How can you apply this principle the next time you are outdoors.

What environmental problems have you seen and how can Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace help solve the problem?

What is one goal you can set to use Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace principles yourself?

How can you help others reach your Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace goals?

How can you help others set their own Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace goals?

How can talking to others about Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace make them more responsible when they are outdoors?

Your Own Questions: