

# INTRODUCTION

## UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL ISSUES

People become involved in community service projects out of a desire to help others. Those who do so should feel proud that they take the time to care about other people.

At the same time, when you help others, you can't decide for them what needs to be done or treat them as if they were helpless.

Maybe you've seen or heard about senior citizens who – despite their years of knowledge and experience – are treated like children just because they are physically frail. Or, perhaps you know of instances where low-income people are perceived as unintelligent just because they struggle to make ends meet.

Volunteering is a give-and-take experience. You share your skills with another and learn something in return.

In addition, the values of the people you work with as a volunteer may differ from yours.

The activities in this group are geared toward helping you think about how to work as a partner with those you want to help.

### Activities

- When Others Decide
- Give and Take
- Minoria/Majoria
- What Would You Do?

# MINI-LECTURE

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE HELPING OTHERS

### Understanding Special Issues

Before we start a community-service learning project, we should spend some time thinking about what it means to help others.

Do we rush into a community and tell its residents what we think needs to be done? Do we go ahead and do what we think is necessary without involving those who live there?

Imagine that someone in your family took a look at your room and decided it was the ideal place to do a community-service learning project. Let's say they rearranged your furniture and tossed out clothes, books and other things they thought you really didn't need anymore.

Your family member may feel very proud of what he or she has accomplished. But how do you think you'd feel? Maybe angry that you weren't consulted? Upset because you didn't ask for this to be done? Mistrustful of that family member in the future?

Putting yourself in others' shoes and trying to imagine how they would feel, is exactly what you need to do whenever you decide on a project. That's why it's so important to plan ahead. And that means talking to community members, visiting the site before starting a project, asking community leaders for permission to begin and publicizing the project in advance.

Accomplishing a community-service learning project can be an extremely rewarding experience for all involved. One way to make it even more successful is to always bear in mind the feelings of others.

# ACTIVITY

## WHEN OTHERS DECIDE

### Procedure

1. Give each person an index card and pencil. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

*"We like to make our own decisions. Or, at the very least, to have a say in things that affect us. In this activity, we're going to think about the times when other people decided what was best for us, without even consulting us."*

*"Take a minute to think about how you felt when someone else made a decision for you. Maybe it was a parent or a volunteer leader. Choose an example you'd be comfortable talking about to the whole group."*

*"Now, write down how you felt about that decision. Did it make you happy? Angry? Feeling left out? When you're ready, find a partner and talk about what you wrote."*

2. Circulate around the participants as they're writing and talking. If they seem stuck, ask questions that may help them remember when a decision was made for them.

### Talking It Over

When 10 to 15 minutes have passed, bring the group back into one large circle. If you'd like, ask someone to record the group's comments on newsprint. Talk about questions that may have come up during the activity or try these:

1. What were some of the decisions you talked about?
2. How did you feel when someone else made decisions for you?
3. Have you ever made decisions for others? How did that feel?
4. Are there times when it's okay for someone else to make decisions for you? Why?
5. Why do you think it's important to involve those you want to help in making decisions about what should be done?

### PURPOSE

To help team members think about why it's important to involve those they seek to help in deciding what needs to be done

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room

### MATERIALS

- 3-inch by 5-inch index cards (one per person)
- Pencils (one per person)
- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers (one set per pair)

### TIME

20 to 30 minutes (depending on group size)

# ACTIVITY

## GIVE AND TAKE

### Procedure

1. Write the following on a sheet of newsprint and display it where everyone can see it:

#### Person Being Helped

I want you to help me because...

When you help me, I learn...

I feel good when...

I feel bad when...

#### Volunteer

I want to help you because...

When I help you, I learn...

I feel good when you...

I feel bad when you...

2. Ask participants to find a partner they haven't worked with before.
3. Give each pair a balloon and ask them to sit facing each other on the floor, with their legs outstretched with the soles of their feet touching.
4. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

*"Some of the best helping relationships are based on give and take. When we volunteer to help someone, we give of our time and skills. But we also learn a great deal from working with that person or group. During this activity, you're going to imagine what it's like to be someone who is being helped and then to be the helper, in different situations.*

*"In the first instance, imagine that one partner is a senior citizen in a nursing home. The other is a teen who has volunteered to visit the senior citizen once a week.*

*"Give the balloons to the senior citizen. Seniors, it's up to you to tell the teens why you want their help. After you've finished, give the balloons to the young people so they can say why they want to help you."*

5. Move among the group to see if anyone needs help.

### PURPOSE

To help participants think about how it feels to be helped and how they might benefit from helping others

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room, preferably carpeted

### MATERIALS

- Balloons (one per pair)
- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Easel

### TIME

15 to 30 minutes

# GIVE AND TAKE

## Procedure, cont'd

6. You can repeat the process, if you want, by using the following situations or you can create your own. Tell the partners to switch roles so they can take turns being in each position.

**Person Being Helped**

Blind classmate,  
walking home from school

Mother visiting soup  
kitchen with children

Youngster working on a  
project or hobby

**Volunteer**

Classmate going in same  
direction

Volunteer at soup kitchen

Teen volunteer

## Talking It Over

Bring the group back together. Ask a volunteer to record discussion points on a piece of newsprint. Ask the group the following questions:

1. What did the people being helped want from the volunteers? What did volunteers want from those they helped?
2. What made people feel good? What made people feel bad?
3. Can you think of anything you learned from this activity that you need to remember when you do a community-service learning project?

# ACTIVITY

## MINORIA/MAJORIA\*

### Procedure

*(Volunteer Hint: Remember that some teens have already faced situations in which they've been on the receiving end of a community-service learning project, so it's important to be sensitive to the emotions that can develop during this activity.)*

*If anyone has participated in this game before, ask him or her to be an observer and keep the details quiet. The game works best when it's new to everyone.)*

- 1.** Explain to the group that they're going to participate in a game called "Minoria/Majoria." The game centers around helping people from other countries.
- 2.** Divide the group in two. Half the group will be Majorians from the "country" of Majoria and half will be Minorians from the "country" of Minoria.
- 3.** Send the Majorians and one facilitator to another room, the "country" of Majoria. Have the Minorians stay in the original room, the "country" of Minoria. The facilitators in each room should pass out the appropriate instruction sheets, armbands and other supplies.
- 4.** Give the teams about 2 minutes to review their instructions. Then have the Minorian facilitator tell the Minorians that they have 20 minutes to plan an independence celebration for their country and decide how to greet the Majorians when they arrive. Have the Majorian facilitator tell the Majorians they have 10 minutes to plan how to help the Minorians.

*(Volunteer Hint: It's important that the groups don't see each other's instruction sheets or know about the different time limitations.)*

- 5.** After 10 minutes, have the Majorians "arrive" in Minoria. If the Minorians protest that they're not ready for the visit, the Majorian facilitator should explain that the Majorians must stick to a tight schedule because of funding regulations.

### PURPOSE

- To help participants learn about working with other cultures
- To help participants learn how it feels to give and receive help

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Recruit two helpers, gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

A room large enough to hold the entire group and another room for the "Majorians"

### MATERIALS

#### Minorian supplies

- Minoria handout and armbands
- Plain brown paper
- String
- Brass fasteners

#### Majorian supplies

- Majoria handout and armbands
- Construction paper
- Ribbon
- Tape
- Scissors

#### For Both

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Easel

### TIME

1½ to 2 hours

\* Adapted with permission from "Aid to Minorians," by Robert Kohls, Tad Edlich, Margo Kiely and Bill Hoffman, in *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methodologies*, by D.S. Hoopes and P. Ventura, editors. Intercultural Press Inc., P.O. Box 700, Yarmouth, Maine, 04096, phone 207-846-5181, Internet <http://www.interculturalpress.com>, email [books@interculturalpress.com](mailto:books@interculturalpress.com), 1979.



## Procedure, cont'd

6. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for the teams to interact with each other. During this time, the facilitators – and those who aren't participating in the game – should watch the Minorians and Majorians interact and take notes on what is happening.

## Talking It Over

It's likely that both teams will have some strong reactions to what happened, so set aside at least 20 to 30 minutes for a discussion period.

1. Once the entire group has finished its task or seems to have reached an impasse, ask the Minorians and Majorians to keep their armbands on and sit with their respective countries. The two groups should sit facing each other.
2. Ask the Minorians to describe the Majorians' culture (you can help, if necessary). Write their descriptions on a piece of newsprint. The Majorians may not comment during this time.
3. Now repeat the process, asking the Majorians to describe the Minorians' culture. Write the Majorians' comments on newsprint and don't allow the Minorians to speak.
4. Next, let each group respond to the other group's description. Note whether the descriptions are positive or negative and why.
5. Ask a representative from each group to describe his or her group's culture and original task to the other group.
6. Ask both groups to vote on which group they'd want to be a part of in real life.

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## Talking It Over, cont'd

- 7.** Talk about why they voted the way they did. If most participants decide to stay with their original culture, discuss what that may mean in terms of how we identify with people from other cultures and determine what is good or bad about another culture. If you want to, read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

*“Even when we know very little about another culture, we tend to draw conclusions about it or compare it with our own. While you were Minorians or Majorians for only a little while, you quickly developed a sense of ‘cultural identity’ with your culture and group. That’s probably why most of you thought your new culture was the best one.*

*“When you work with people from other cultures, you must be careful not to jump to any conclusions about them or only look at negative things. You need to respect the fact that different ways of doing things aren’t necessarily good or bad – they’re just different.”*

## Try This, Too

This game also provides a great jumping off point for a discussion about how it feels to give and receive help.

- 1.** Ask the Minorians how it felt when the Majorians came to their country. Did the Majorians respect Minorian culture? Were the Minorians pleased to see the Majorians?
- 2.** Then ask the Majorians how they felt when they visited Minoria. Were they made to feel welcome? Did the Minorians appreciate their efforts to help them?
- 3.** Ask the Minorians how they would have liked the Majorians to act.
- 4.** Ask the Majorians how they wanted the Minorians to act.
- 5.** Ask the entire group how they can use what they learned from the exercise in their own lives.

Once the discussion is over, it’s very important to do some activity to help the participants come back together as a cohesive group. One way is to have everyone throw their armbands into a common box.

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Congratulations, you've just become a citizen of Majoria! It's one of the wealthiest nations in the world. While there are some poor people in Majoria, most residents here enjoy a standard of living that more than meets their needs for basic survival.

Through trade and its role as a dominant force in world politics, Majoria has been able to acquire the raw materials it needs to support its standard of living and sell its goods in the international marketplace.

Majorians are very task-oriented people. They believe it's important to set goals and accomplish them in as little time as possible. You won't find Majorians wasting time on idle conversation when so much needs to be done.

## Your Assignment

As a Majorian, you've just volunteered to be on a technical assistance team that will take supplies donated by your rich country to an obscure little one called Minoria.

You and your team members have 10 minutes to plan what you'll do to help the Minorians when you arrive there.

Once you've arrived, you have 30 minutes to help the Minorians plan and build a major project that can only benefit their country. Your goals are to:

- Help Minoria set its priorities that so it places the few resources it does have where the needs are greatest.
- Help the Minorians to wisely use the materials you've brought.
- Give helpful hints on construction and also technical assistance, on the final project.

**(Note:** *Your supplies – construction paper, tape, scissors and more – can represent anything you want them to.)*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MINORIA

**Minoria is a poor country, colonized by Gezboria – a wealthy nation. It has only recently won its freedom.**

**Most of Minoria's residents are very poor, although there are some wealthy Minorians. There are only a few doctors – and just one hospital – in the entire country.**

**Most of the houses in Minoria have no electricity or running water. Only a few children finish more than a few years of schooling, since most are needed by their families to help in the fields. There aren't many schools available, either.**

**Minorians grow bananas, coffee and chocolate to export to countries like Majoria. However, the income from these crops is usually not substantial enough for the workers to buy food for their families. Most Minorian children are undernourished.**

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# HANDOUT

## WELCOME TO MINORIA!

Congratulations, you've just become a citizen of Minoria! This is an old country with a noble history and rich culture. Unfortunately, it's been dominated by other nations for so long that much of that culture has been destroyed.

After a lengthy battle, Minoria finally freed itself from Gezborian rule. It's just now beginning to regain its sense of independence and pride.

Under colonial rule, the small farms that dotted the countryside were consolidated into large banana, coffee and chocolate estates. Today, the Minorian economy relies mostly on exporting these crops to wealthy nations such as Majoria.

Sadly, prices for these goods have fallen dramatically in recent years. At the same time, Minoria's debts have sharply increased because of the rising costs of oil, fertilizer, machinery and other things that must be imported, since Minoria was not allowed to industrialize while a colony.

Although Minorians face serious problems, they accept that change takes time.

Minorians place a strong emphasis on personal relationships. They love long conversations where people can get to know each other before coming to decisions.

### Your Assignment

As top officials in Minoria, you and your team members have been asked by the country's president to identify ways to help the Minorian people. Most importantly, the president wants help restoring the pride of Minorians.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the country's independence. Your team is searching for an appropriate symbol to restore pride. While the president has suggested a monument, you are free to come up with ideas of your own.

You've just learned that a team of volunteers will arrive soon from Majoria. Although you've never been there, you know it's one of the wealthiest nations in the world. You also know that Majorian volunteers are bringing materials to donate to Minorians.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MAJORIA

Majoria is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. While there are some poor people in Majoria, most residents there enjoy a standard of living that more than meets their needs for basic survival.

Through trade, and its role as a dominant force in world politics, Majoria has been able to acquire the raw materials it needs to support its standard of living and sell its goods in the international marketplace.

Understanding Special Issues

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## Your Assignment, cont'd

You and your team have 20 minutes to discuss the best way to restore Minorian pride and to figure out how you will react when the Majorians arrive.

Once the Majorians arrive, you'll have 30 minutes to work together on your project. As you plan what to do, remember:

- Your country has been dominated by outsiders for centuries, but you are determined to fiercely protect your right to make your own decisions.
- You want to use your own native materials and resources at hand as much as possible. You've become skeptical of other countries' motives, since many have tried to dispose of inferior or hazardous materials, in the guise of donations to your country. You're also wary of politics and of becoming indebted to outsiders.

**(Note:** *Your supplies – brown paper, string and more – can represent anything that you want.*)

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# ACTIVITY

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

### Procedure

1. Divide the group into smaller groups of three to five people. Pass out team instruction sheets. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

*“Sometimes we can think of a great community-service learning project, but we fail to find out whether our idea fits with the ideas of those we want to help.*

*“Let’s say we decide to organize a bingo game for senior citizens. We’ve decided they like to play bingo, but in fact they might rather do something else.*

*“Or, we may grab someone’s wheelchair without first asking the person sitting there whether he or she would like our help.*

*“And maybe we get the idea in our heads that people who need our help are not quite as good as we are.*

*“We’re going to take some time to create skits that give you a chance to really think about – and also show – how the good intentions we start with could actually be hurtful, not helpful.*

*“But you’ll also have the opportunity to show some of the ways you can be really helpful.”*

2. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for the teams to develop their skits – a hurtful one and a helpful one.
3. When they’re all ready, bring the entire group together and ask the individual teams to perform their skits. Ask each group to comment on each skit. They can use the following questions as guidelines:
  - Why could some of the things in the first skit be hurtful to those being helped?
  - Why would some of the things the team did in the second skit be helpful?

### PURPOSE

To help participants identify ways to work with those they want to help and include them in the decision-making process

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Recruit one or two helpers, gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

Large room with space for small groups to work

### MATERIALS

- Team instruction sheets
- Skit props (optional)

### TIME

20 to 30 minutes (depending on group size)



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

### Talking It Over

1. Once the skits are completed, ask the group to list things they learned from the skits.
2. Ask the group how they can use what they learned from the skits in community-service learning activities.



# TEAM INSTRUCTIONS

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

You and your teammates are trying to decide what to do for a community-service learning project. Choose one of the situations listed below and develop two skits centering on how you'd work with the people who would be helped by your project.

In the first skit, show what you *shouldn't* do when trying to help others.

In the second skit, show what you *should* do when trying to help others.

Be prepared to talk about why you created the skits the way you did.

### **Situation 1**

Several senior citizens live alone in your neighborhood. Your team would like to help them. You've also talked about helping senior citizens in a nursing home.

### **Situation 2**

A number of kids in your school are having difficulty with reading. Your team would like to help them.

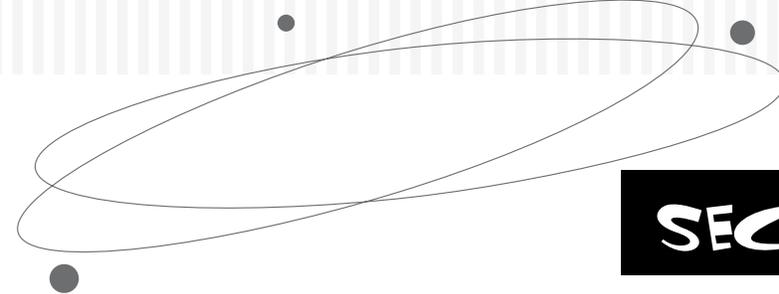
### **Situation 3**

The homeless in your community concern you. Your team wants to help them.

### **Situation 4**

Think of another issue in your community that concerns you and use that in your skits.





# SECTION REFLECTION

## Ideas for Reflection

You may want to take the opportunity to record your feelings about what you've learned so far in a journal or scrapbook. Some questions to consider include:

- 1.** What have you learned about helping others?
- 2.** What would you like to teach others?
- 3.** If you needed help, what one thing would you most want someone who helps you to do or say?
- 4.** Why do you think it's important to understand and respect cultural differences?

## Ideas for Ongoing Projects

- 1.** Interview senior citizens, people with disabilities or others to find out how they feel about people helping them. You may want to ask questions from the "Give and Take" activity.
- 2.** Organize a program to teach others about "Understanding Special Issues" using activities from this section.
- 3.** Talk with someone from another culture about the differences between his or her culture and yours.



