

“Stand and Declare”: Exploring Personal Values

Overview: Leaders may quickly learn that personal value systems, as well as organizational values, play a large part in decision-making and leadership abilities. This workshop asks students to explore their personal values, take a stand on an issue, and defend them, while respecting the values of others.

Category: Reflection, Communication, Public Speaking, Community Building

Level: Explore

Learning Goals:

- To explore personal values
- To practice articulating and defending personal values
- To practice respectfully listening to contrasting points of view
- To explore how values effect decisions, leadership, and service

Materials:

- Masking tape
- 4 signs
 - “Strongly Agree”
 - “Agree”
 - “Disagree”
 - “Strongly Disagree”
- Values Statements List
- Newsprint/Dry Erase Board
- Markers

How to Prepare:

- Tape the signs in the corners of the room before students arrive

How to Do/ Brief Outline:

The outline has the following parts:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Introduction and Ground Rules | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 2. Exploring Personal Values | suggested time 40 minutes |
| 3. Closing Discussion | suggested time 15 minutes |

Part 1) Introduction and Ground Rules

Suggested time: 5 minutes

1. Share with the students the purpose and goals of the session, answering any immediate questions that they have – “To learn you own values and convictions, reflect on how those were developed, and to stand up for those values before your peers, while respecting their stance on those issues as well.”
2. Set the ground rules for the session:
 - a. This workshop requires you to think about your own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs and to articulate them. Please use “I” statements and speak for yourself, not for any group
 - b. In groups, you want to articulate your own point of view and listen to others’ points of view. Even though you are in the same “corner” you may not all have the same ideas
 - c. The facilitator’s job is to provide a space where all can feel comfortable speaking. If anyone’s statements or actions infringe on that, they will be asked to leave
 - d. Everyone is encouraged to speak at least once, but you will not be forced to speak if you don’t want to

Part 2) Exploring Personal Values

Suggested time: 40 minutes

1. Ask, “How many of you have ever been criticized for a decision you have made?” “Did that decision affect other people in a group or in your family?” “What part do our values play in our ability to make decisions?”
2. Explain the exercise:
 - a. Instruct students to notice the signs in the four corners of the room
 - i. Note what the signs say
 - ii. Note the placement of the signs
 - iii. Note that there is no neutral
 - b. Facilitator will read a statement
 - c. Students will decide where they stand on the issue
 - d. Students silently stand in the region of the sign most appropriate for their feelings toward the statement
 - e. Once everyone has decided where they stand on the issue, students will have approximately 2 minutes to discuss in their groups why they stand where they do on that issue and how/why their values impact that decision
 - f. At the end of discussion time, groups will elect one person to report to the rest of the class the general arguments for their group
 - g. Individuals will then have the opportunity to respectfully ask questions of other groups
 - h. After questions are asked, students may then change to another group if they choose, but facilitator may ask them to respond why they are moving
3. Using the “Values Statements” list, begin the exercise

4. Facilitator should ask appropriate “thought-provoking” questions of students along the way, making them defend their decisions without making them actually feel defensive

Part 3) Closing Discussion

Suggested time: 15 minutes

1. Bring group together in circle
2. Ask, “How are our values developed?”
 - a. Write responses on the board
3. Ask, “How do your values effect how you look at the world?”
4. Ask, “Which statements, if any, were new to you? In other words, which statements have you never evaluated your value of before?”
5. Ask, “Was it hard to explain your stance on any of the statements? Why?”
6. Ask, “Was it hard to listen to another groups point of view that contrasted with yours in any of the issues? Which one? Why was it difficult?”
7. Ask, “Did you learn anything new about yourself or another student? How can you use the lessons from this exercise in your service?”

Credits:

1. Based on “Stand and Declare”. Campus Outreach Opportunity League, 1998.