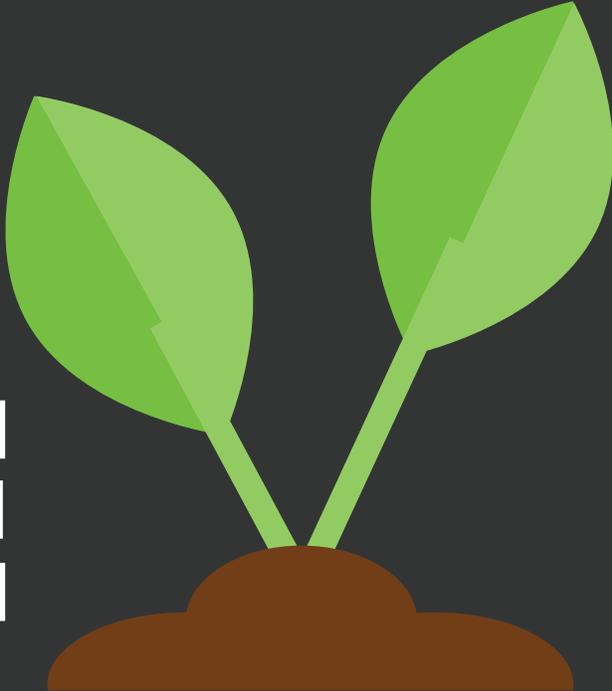


## MODULE 7:

*Reflection and Looking Ahead*

# WE PLANT SEEDS



*A How-to Guide for Effective Jewish  
Service-learning Programs*

Brought to you by Repair the World, in partnership  
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## INTRODUCTION

Effective service and volunteer activities have goals beyond that one experience. They aim to create change within participants, to help them live ongoing lives of service. Experience, however, is not always transparent: While we are having experiences, it is not always clear to us what we might be gaining from them. Some of us can reflect independently on our experiences, processing and learning without prompting. Many of us need help identifying what we learned and the implications of that learning. We need space to think out loud, muse as we think, and work our way into ideas and commitments. We need opportunity to stop and consider what just happened to us. We need to be challenged by provocative questions that bring out new ideas. We also need validation, support, or answers and ideas in response to our own difficult questions about our work. Even those who do not typically share out loud have opportunities during reflection to consider their own experiences as they listen to the ideas of others.

Reflection as part of service activities allows an individual's experience to become concrete and for lessons from that experience to become integrated into an individual's life. Without reflection, participants' experiences may not have that broader impact on their perspectives and lives.

Reflection often happens at the end of an activity, formally, in a circle, with all participants talking and learning. It does not have to happen that way, though, as there are a diversity of types of reflection activities. It's important to consider which activities will best suit your activity and your group - and to acknowledge that different types of reflection work better for certain people than others, especially when comparing introverts and extroverts. Ideally at least 30 minutes is set aside for reflection after the activity has been completed, but even shorter periods can have an impact on participants, if that's all there's meaningful time for.

In addition to reflection itself, which helps participants process and internalize lessons learned from their experience, the other key aspect of closing out an effective service project is to ensure that there is time built in for participants to look forward and to think about what they want to learn, think about or do differently, based on the experience they had. This module contains:

- I. Reflection
- II. Looking Ahead

## I. REFLECTION

The following are a variety of activities that can be used to facilitate reflection for a volunteer group.

### A. TRIANGLE - SQUARE - CIRCLE

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this activity is to give participants a framework to think about different aspects of what they're taking away from their service experience.

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**Overview:**

This activity is facilitated in two parts - first, participants complete an activity individually, then the group debriefs together.

**Materials Needed:**

- Blank paper
- Pens/pencils

**Length of Activity:**

10 minutes

**Procedure:****1. Individual Reflection Activity (5 min)**

Each participant should get a piece of white paper and a pen or pencil. Ask participants to draw three shapes on their paper big enough to write inside- a triangle, a square and a circle. In the triangle, they should write down three important insights, learnings or pieces of information from their experience. In the square, they should write down a few things from the experience that “square” with their thinking or with which they agree. In the circle, they should write down anything that is still “circling” in their head or that they have questions about.

**2. Debrief (5 min)**

Ask a few members of the group to share something that they wrote with the group.

### B. EXTINGUISHING/IGNITING THE FLAME OF SERVICE

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this activity is to process both the challenging and inspirational parts of the service experience.

**Overview:**

This activity is facilitated in one part and requires space where a group can sit in a circle.

**Materials Needed:**

- Tealights
- Matches/lighter

**Length of Activity:**

15-30 minutes, depending on group size

**Procedure:**

Have the group sit in a circle in a darkened room. Each participant should have two candles, one lit, and one unlit.

Going around the circle, have each participant share one experience from the day that was challenging, difficult, or upsetting, something that “extinguished/dampened

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their passion or motivation,” and then blow out their candle. Once everyone has shared, the room will be dark. Allow a few moments of quiet.

Now, have the participants go around the circle sharing one experience from the day that inspired them, made them laugh, motivated them or otherwise ignited their passion. After each person shares, they should re-light their candle from the candle of the person next to them. The first to go will need to use matches.

Finally, have the participants go around the circle a final time, sharing one thing they did or commit to doing to bring more joy, hope, and inspiration into their own lives or their communities based on their experience. After they share, they will light their second candle in the same way they just lit the first.

Close by sharing how difficult service work can be, but also how important it is, and how inspiring can be. You can also point out that the room is now twice as bright as when you started the activity - remind participants that we can make this easier by sharing our challenges and successes as a community, and affirm that we are igniting the passion, motivation and potential of others in our communities through this work.

*Note: This exercise intentionally uses the language “igniting” and “extinguishing” flames rather than “light” and “dark.” Linking light with goodness and dark with badness can be extremely problematic when extending the metaphor to race. Please be conscious of this potential when using this activity so as not to reinforce problematic dynamics.*

### C. STRONG CIRCLE (10 MIN)

**Purpose:**

Borrowed from City Year, the purpose of this activity is to check in with a group at the end of an experience and create a sense of connectedness.

**Overview:**

This activity is facilitated in one part and requires space where a group can stand in a circle.

**Materials Needed:**

None

**Length of Activity:**

10 minutes

**Procedure:**

The group stands in a tight circle, shoulder to shoulder - everyone in the circle and no one outside the circle. Pose a pertinent question to the group, asking for a one word answer.

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Possible questions include:

- How was today's service experience for you?
- How are you feeling after this experience?
- What are you taking with you from today's experience?

People speak their answers in turn, around the strong circle.

#### D. WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT

##### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this activity is to promote discussion that begins with reviewing the details of an experience and moves towards critical thinking and more holistic application of takeaways and themes.

##### **Overview:**

This activity is facilitated in three parts - first the group discusses the "what" of their experience, then they discuss its meaning or implications and finally they talk about what comes next as a result of the experience.

##### **Materials Needed:**

None

##### **Length of Activity:**

30-45 minutes

##### **Procedure:**

###### **1. What (5-10 min)**

Ask the group to recall the substance of the group's interaction/experience including facts and descriptions of what happened, to create an objective foundation for the discussion.

Sample Questions:

- What happened?
- What did you observe?
- What issue is being addressed or population is positively impacted by the service?

###### **2. So What? (10-15 min)**

Now, shift from description to interpretation or analysis. Inquire about what meaning participants took from the experience.

Sample Questions:

- Did you learn new information or a skill, or clarify an interest?
- Did you hear, smell, or feel anything notable, or that surprised you?
- How was your experience different from what you expected?
- What impacts the way you view the situation/experience? (Through what lens are you viewing it?)
- What did you like/dislike about the experience?
- What did you learn about the people/community?
- What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community? How did this

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experience address those needs?

#### 3. Now What? (15-20 min)

Finally, transition from the interpretive to the contextual, exploring this particular situation's place in a bigger picture and its future impact on or application to the individual, the group, the community.

Sample Questions:

- What seem to be the root causes of the issue addressed?
- What learning or growth occurred for you in this experience?
- How can you apply this learning?
- What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue?
- What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties?
- What information can you share with your peers or the community?
- If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?

### E. FREE WRITING

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to provide an individual opportunity for reflection, especially good for introverts or those who process better in writing.

#### Overview:

This activity can be facilitated in one or two parts. Either, it can focus solely on the free-writing itself, or you can have participants share and discuss their writing as a second aspect of the activity.

#### Materials Needed:

- Journals or paper
- pencils for each participant
- the “trigger” question either written up on chart paper or copied on slips of paper for each participant

#### Length of Activity:

10-25 minutes

#### Procedure:

##### 1. Writing (10 min)

In advance, identify a “trigger” for participants’ writing, such as a shared group experience, quote, poem, music, art, topic, word, question etc.

Some possible trigger questions include:

- How was your experience different from what you expected?
- What did you like/dislike about the experience?
- What did you learn about the people/community?
- What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community? How did this experience address those needs?
- What learning or growth occurred for you in this experience?

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Ensure that each participant has writing materials and a comfortable place to write. Tell participants that they will have a certain amount of uninterrupted writing time. Assure participants that they will not have to share what they write (although you may provide the opportunity for volunteers to share an excerpt of their writing). If space allows, encourage participants to spread out and find a place where they are comfortable to sit and write. Give participants the “trigger.”

#### 2. Discussion (15 min)

After the set time, you might wish to ask participants to look over what they’ve written and decide if they would like to share a part of their writing with a partner or with the group. If it feels appropriate to take it a step further, you can engage the group in discussion, asking the participants to reflect on what they heard from others, and to identify themes that emerged from the writing.

*Note: While some participants may be more inclined to engage in this kind of individual exercise, others may have a hard time focusing. Usually first-time free writers find five minutes to be a long time. Free writing takes practice and gets easier and more comfortable over time.*

### F. FISHBOWL

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to allow large groups to benefit from centralized group discussion while mitigating some of the challenges present in large group discussions.

#### Overview:

This activity is facilitated in three parts - first the facilitator sets the activity up for the group, then the group engages in the activity, and then they debrief it.

#### Materials Needed:

- chairs

#### Length of Activity:

30-60 minutes

#### Procedure:

##### A. Set Up and Instructions (5 min)

Ask participants to sit in a circle and orient them to the activity. Set up three or four chairs in the center of the circle.

Review the “fishbowl rules”:

- Swim in before you begin: Participants must find a seat in the center before they can offer their thoughts to the conversation.
- When you’ve had your say, swim away: After participants offer an observation, they must vacate the center and return to the outer circle, leaving space for other participants.

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- No shark attacks: Participants should be encouraged to challenge one another's ideas instead of attacking each other personally.

Choose one volunteer to fill each chair to begin the discussion.

#### **B. The Activity (15-40 min)**

Offer the first "fish" - a question or prompt to get them started; from there, the discussion is free to lead itself.

#### **C. Debrief (10-15 min)**

After the fishbowl, consider debriefing both the discussion and the format.

## II. LOOKING AHEAD

This section includes one activity and a set of additional tips for helping volunteers think about and apply the learnings of their service beyond the day of service.

### **A. TWO MINUTE IMPACT (45-55 MIN)**

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this activity is to prepare participants to share their stories about service so that the experience can have an impact beyond that one day.

#### **Overview:**

This activity is facilitated in six parts - first, the group does a check-in, then the facilitator sets up the activity, then the participants brainstorm an answer to the central question individually, then they practice it with a partner, then they share with the group and finally the group debriefs together.

#### **Materials Needed:**

None

#### **Length of Activity:**

45-55 minutes

#### **Procedure:**

##### **1. Check-in (5-10 min)**

After service, gather your group. Go around in a circle and have every participant name one thing they learned through service today.

##### **2. Setting up the Activity (5 min)**

Share with participants that when people ask them about their service experiences, they have two choices. They can say "fine" or "great!" and that will likely be the end of the conversation. Or they can say something which shares with the listener what they learned, something that might even motivate them to get involved with this project or with service in general. Usually you only have a minute or two in which to do this before people get bored. This activity allows participants to practice

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responding to the question: "How was service?" by developing answers that briefly but genuinely express how important their work was, and some of the great things they learned.

#### **3. Brainstorming (5 min)**

Give participants a few minutes to brainstorm and take notes in response to the prompt: What would you want others to know about your service experience today?

#### **4. Practice (10 min)**

Have participants pair up, and practice asking and answering the question: How was service? Or, how was your weekend? a few times each.

#### **5. Group Share (10-15 min)**

Bring the group back together. Ask for a few volunteers to model answers they felt good about. Emphasize that there is no one right answer - a great answer is any answer that gets your listener to think!

#### **6. Debrief (10 min)**

Conclude by discussing as a group the following questions:

Why is it important to share this experience?

What kinds of answers seem to work best?

Other Tips for Extending Learning Beyond the Service Activity Include:

- Identify an advocacy-related action that participants can take after the service experience, such as writing a letter to their representatives on the issue or signing an online petition related to the issue
- Set up a follow-up phone banking activity where participants can call decision-makers to influence a local or national decision being made on the issue
- Arrange a movie night and discussion featuring a documentary or movie to offer participants the opportunity to learn more about the issue
- Provide participants with a list of additional resources on the topic if they want to learn more; this can include articles, books, movies, podcasts, etc.
- Identify a local expert on the issue and set up a time for that person to speak to participants as a group - or to the broader community - about the issue
- Provide participants with information about further volunteer opportunities related to the issue

## CLOSING

Reflecting on a service experience and identifying ways to extend participants' learning beyond the day of service are key elements of ensuring that service activities optimize the impact on participants. The activities in this module provide a range of different ways to engage participants in this process that can work for different sized groups, as well as participants with different preferred styles of reflection.