



# Self-Reflection: Who Are We in this Work

**R**eflecting upon your own beliefs and experiences is an important step in creating an effective program. Each of us has different life circumstances that have in one way or another shaped the way we view ourselves and those around us. These experiences also shape the way we operate in our surroundings and how we view diversity.

This tool is designed to assist you in reflecting on who you are in your work by examining how your experiences shape your interactions with others and with the youth in your program. Engaging in this kind of reflection can help you find resources for connecting with youth, and identify areas where you feel you may still need additional learning. The tool will also help you appreciate the dynamics of diversity and equity in your life, allow you to experience the power of sharing stories across differences, and come to better understand other staff members with whom you work.

## Part A: Self-Reflection

*Please take some time to reflect on the following questions. You may choose to write down your responses completely, jot down notes, or reflect without writing:*

- 🕒 We are all members of various social groups. What are the categories you feel are important in describing yourself?
  
- 🕒 Out of the categories you have chosen, describe some experiences you've had where being part of that group was a positive experience (e.g. you were valued, you were drawn upon as a resource).
  
- 🕒 Out of the categories you have chosen, describe some experiences you've had where being part of that group was a challenge (e.g. you were devalued, you experienced discrimination).
  
- 🕒 How do your experiences help you in relating to young people and their families, and interacting with other staff?
  
- 🕒 What are some of the differences between your experiences and the lives of the children and youth in your program?
  
- 🕒 Have you received any training, professional development, or education that has helped you to better connect with the youth in your program?
  
- 🕒 How do your experiences support your approach in creating, leading, and implementing program activities?
  
- 🕒 What do you need to know in order to better serve the young people in your program?

## Part B: Sharing Our Stories

Once staff have had a chance to reflect on their experiences, a facilitator should bring everyone together for a collective share. Sharing stories is an effective way of learning more about yourselves by: articulating your experiences out loud; acknowledging how your experiences can help you to connect with the young people you work with; taking note of the resources that you offer through your experiences; and providing a team-building opportunity that enables people to learn more about each other.

If you have a large staff, we recommend you break up into groups of no more than four to share your stories. This will allow for a more intimate setting as well as more time for each individual to talk. Here are some suggested discussion questions. Individuals may refer back to their reflection sheets, if needed:

- 🕒 What is an experience or a story from your life that helps you to better connect with the youth in your program?
- 🕒 Based on your experiences, what are some differences you find between yourself and the youth in your program? What are the implications of these differences?
- 🕒 Is there any information you would like to have in order to better serve the youth in your program?

If your staff was split into small groups for the story sharing, regroup as a whole staff. The facilitator should go around the circle and have each staff member briefly sum up his or her experience of both sharing stories and hearing other people's stories. Acknowledge everybody for their courageous participation in this activity.