

Reflection and the ABI Experience

"I'm really excited to go on this ABI!"

"We're doing some really cool stuff this week."

"I met some great people during our week of service."

Many of us have probably heard students say similar things when they talk about an ABI. But what do these quick responses really tell us about the experience and its impact? How can we facilitate deeper conversation and thinking about the ABI experience before, during and after the trip? *Reflection!!*

Reflection provides an opportunity for ABI team members to articulate their individual responses to the shared experience and for the team to dig deeper as a group. Reflection can help to explore and unpack questions of:

1. Personal Identity
Who am I? Where do I come from? Why am I here? What is important to me?
2. Observation
What do I see and hear? What do I notice about this place and these people?
3. Emotional Response
How do I feel about this experience? Why do I feel this way? Is this a new feeling?
4. Assessment of Perception
Why did I interpret my experience that way? What values and experiences shaped my perception? Why might it be difficult for me to see things a new way?
5. Personal Analysis
What role do I play in this social justice issue? What gifts can I offer to make positive changes? What sources of strength and support do I have?
6. Social Analysis
What systems or structures are at the root of the issue? What powers are at play here?

It's important to recognize that we are talking about 3 distinct types of reflection within this list.

- **Personal** reflection – when we think, pray, or just “be” on our own.
- **Interpersonal** reflection – when we talk with those around us.
- **Structural** reflection – when we examine systems that influence how we think and act.

As a reflection facilitator, you are called to create a safe environment for open conversation. Encourage a respectful environment by:

- Helping to create trust and mutual support among group members
- Using “I think” and “I feel” language that is non-judgmental
- Challenging one another in a caring way
- Listening actively to one another
- Being aware of obstacles to conversation, such as time limitations, newness to conversation, surface discussion, and uncomfortable group dynamics.

The next page offers some general tips for you as a reflection facilitator during your ABI. You can play a great part in helping your team to learn, grow, serve and do justice through your trip!

Modified from: Marquette Action Program Facilitator's Handbook

General Tips for Reflection During an ABI

1. Do what works.

Every ABI team is unique – enjoy knowing that your shared experience will never be repeated! Honor that uniqueness by crafting reflection opportunities around the group's emerging personality and needs. Use frameworks and suggestions creatively.

2. Let the group provide suggestions and even lead reflection.

Help facilitate the leader in each of your participants by offering opportunities to create or lead reflection. You are all members of the same team – have fun with it!

3. Respect the expression of all group members.

Allowing each team member to express him or herself may mean using varied forms of reflection. One night, group discussion might work. The next night, drawing may help someone to “speak.” Also, remember to respect *silence*. Some personalities may remain pretty quiet while being deeply engaged in the experience.

4. Be ready for various responses.

Reflection is a powerful tool during an emotional, tiring and awesome experience. Some may express their emotions in tears while others may find great humor. Another person may be angry while another is silent. Be respectful to these responses (but expect that they be respectful to the group) and allow the group to learn about and from each other.

5. Know your strengths.

Enter the experience with confidence in your skills and with the humility that none of us can do it all. Let the complementary strengths of others emerge to help the team.

6. Create formal and informal reflection opportunities.

Reflection does not always have to be planned or formal. Striking up a conversation with someone in the van or with a couple of people on the worksite can be a powerful experience. It can also encourage group members to do the same thing on their own.

7. Give it time.

No one reflection session will answer all questions, relieve all worries and result in a fool-proof plan for world peace! Reflection is an on-going process for all of us as we learn and grow throughout our lives. So structure formal reflection sessions in a reasonable timeframe, and let the conversation flow naturally.