



Sulam's Guide: Reflection

Reflection is the process you go through to make sense out of the service that you do. It leads to better understanding which leads to more informed action.

think about **reflection**

When you volunteer to do service, many important things can happen:

Jewish **learning**

service opportunities

- someone else is helped- their life is somehow affected positively by your service
- the world is made a slightly better place to live in
- you feel good
- you develop a new insight into the world you live in
- you develop a new insight into other people who share this world with you
- you develop a better understanding of who you are
- you grow as a Jew
- you grow as a human being
- And, as a result of no.'s 4 through 8, you are better able to serve others and have a lasting impact on the world you live in

As you can see, service is not only about doing good for other people; it also is important for the impact that it has on you, the volunteer.

The key to being able to accomplish all of these things is the process we call **REFLECTION**. Without reflection, you only are able to scratch the surface of your experience. Without reflection, you are wasting an incredible opportunity to enhance the impact of the volunteer work that you do.

OK, so what do we mean when we use the term 'reflection'?

When you do a project, and a friend asks you what you did, you can report to them, step by step, on everything that took place: **THAT'S NOT REFLECTION!** - You are simply describing the events of the day.

But, when your friend asks you,

- "Why did you do it?"
- "How did it make you feel?"
- "How did this experience affect you?"
- "Was it like what you expected? If not, what was different?"
- "So what! What difference does it make, anyway?"
- "What do you want to do now? Why?"
- "What surprised you about your experience?"
- "What were the people like at the place where you did your service? How did you react to them? How did they react to you? Why is that?"
- "How do you think they felt about your being there?"
- "What did you learn from this experience?"

These kinds of questions move you into reflection as you think about what's going on beyond the "WHAT" and come to more deeply understand who you are and how you fit into the world.

Now, it's possible that your friends aren't used to asking you these kinds of questions. So, there are other ways that you can be drawn into being reflective about your service experience. It is best if you have a chance to reflect before you volunteer and after (even during the experience is OK). So next time you volunteer, try some of these ideas to really maximize the impact of that experience.

- Ask your parents to sit and listen to you for 15-20 minutes as you share your experience (No, we're serious. Go ask your parents, I'm sure they would be thrilled to talk with you). They might have insights into aspects of your experience that you haven't considered yet.
- Keep a journal of your experiences. You should try to write about how you felt and what you thought- not just what you did. If you had a very meaningful and thought provoking experience, you might want to write in your journal every time something comes up that relates to or makes you think about your experience- whether you are watching T.V. or out to dinner with your friends.
- Talk with friends . The best way to develop ideas and better understanding is by talking them through with people you feel comfortable with. They might see things from a different perspective and can help you develop new insights.
- Discuss certain things with a Rabbi, teacher or other family member.
- Ask your teacher/Rabbi if you may give a short presentation to your class or members of your congregation. Be sure to have the other students ask you questions. Judaic studies/Religious school classes and synagogue groups are great environments for this as you can connect it to your Jewish learning (We can help you with this as well!).
- Do an art project inspired by your experience. Whether it you do a painting, photo, collage, or sculpture, make sure you write down the ideas and symbolism that connect you work to your feeling about the service learning experience.
- If you are a musician follow the same steps as an art project: write a song!
Write an opinion or editorial piece for your school newspaper.
- Read the last few week's newspapers and cut out articles that relate to your experience. Include your thoughts on these articles in your journal.
- Write a letter to an elected official explaining your experience and any action you would like them to take based on the needs you saw and concerns you have.
- Volunteer some more. Even if you are "done" with your volunteer project, it may help to go back to the scene to help understand more. Additionally, it is very helpful to experience another organization dealing with the same social issue. How is this reflection? It will be if you ask yourself about the differences and the similarities between the two.

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