



ACTIVITY

Community and Belonging

Materials Needed

- Scrap paper for small groups, pens
- Large sheets of paper to hang on the wall, or board

Time Needed

20-30 minutes

Goal

The issues around universal versus particular can be effectively explored by asking learners to think about their own experiences in belonging to various groups and communities. In this session, we discuss the different ways in which students feel more connected to certain groups than others, with an opportunity for them to raise issues from their own perspective.

Before You Get Started

Look at the list of enduring understandings. Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

1. Jewish tradition and texts are concerned with particular and universal values. There are debates about questions of responsibility (for example, the debate of “*aniyei ircha kodmim*”) and the role of the Jewish People to improve the world as a whole (for example, the concept of “*Tikkun Olam*”).
2. In the 21st century, a commitment to Jewish Peoplehood can exist fruitfully with tension between particularistic values that ensure the existence and well-being of the Jewish People and a universalistic commitment to general causes.
3. The two agendas can conflict but the solution has to be in the form of a compromise.
4. A People which only cares about itself lacks soul and purpose.
5. A People that neglects developing its own identity and strength risks losing the power to do good all together.

Directions for Activity

1. Discuss with your group: What is a community? What is the difference between a group/ a crowd/ a community? Is physical proximity a necessary part of community?
2. In small groups, have the participants think about the communities in which they participate. Have them list at least 5 different types of communities.
3. While the participants are still in small groups, stop the first part of their task and ask them at intervals of a minute or so the following questions: Have they listed the following categories: “human beings,” “males,” “females,” “teenagers,” “young adults” or “students”? Should they be up there on the list? Why or why not? What about chat groups, virtual groups etc. Can they be considered communities? If so, when? In what circumstances?
4. Get each group to write a definition of what a community is for them, such that it includes all of the communities that they have listed.
5. Now coming back together, list all their communities and compare the definitions. It is suggested that the distinction be made between “meaningful” communities to which each person belongs and “meaningless” communities – i.e. the communities that are important for each individual and the communities which have less significance. These will likely vary by individual. For different people,

different communities might be either significant or less significant. For example, the community of “human beings” might be insignificant for many people who see it as too large a group for them to identify with but for an ideologically committed humanist it might be meaningful. Gender communities might be meaningful for some (for example, committed feminists), while for others they might be meaningless. Bring these differences out.

6. Raise the following questions:
7. What purpose or role does a community have to serve for the individual or for the group in order to be considered meaningful or significant?
8. What about Jewish community (or Jews)? Does this appear on their lists? Why or why not?
9. If the word Jewish appeared on the list, ask them whether they see themselves as belonging to the Jewish community or to “a” Jewish community. For whom is it a meaningful community? For whom is it not? Why?
10. What, if anything, do they gain from the Jewish community? What, if anything, is difficult for them in being part of that community? What would they have to gain from the community in order for it to be a meaningful category of community for them personally?

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understanding that you set out to teach surface during this activity?