

Activity 2

Who, what and where are we?

– thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears

Summary

Young people answer various kinds of questionnaire about their personal interests, and in this way reflect on their own identities and personal qualities. They may then administer the same or similar questionnaires to others as part of a survey, and present a report on their findings in writing, or through PowerPoint, an interactive website, collages, an e-zine, or video diaries.

Why?

The benefits that young people gain from this exercise include the following. They:

- are reassured it is OK to be interested in and to care about their own development, relationships, worries, hopes, values and ideas
- gain a sense they are not alone – there are other people out there who have thoughts, feelings, anxieties and aspirations similar to their own
- feel young people are respected and trusted, and recognized as being resources from whom they can learn
- gain therefore a preliminary sense of safety and security
- receive permission, so to speak, to talk more openly than they might do otherwise about their own feelings and experiences
- are stimulated to reflect on differences and commonalities amongst human beings, including people broadly similar to themselves in age and religious heritage
- develop empathy for other people
- are reminded that there is great diversity amongst Muslims in general and British Muslims in particular

- encounter the concept of multiple identity, and appreciate that both they and others have a range of loyalties and places where they belong.

Preparation

You need a selection of simple questionnaires such as those on page 32.

Procedure

You may well wish to start with something very simple, for example the questions in Handout 2. Young people can jot their answers in writing, or alternatively can use the questions to interview each other in pairs.

Next, Handout 3, Key things about me. For this, young people write words or phrases in the cloud-boxes signifying groups to which they belong and significant roles they play (female, Mancunian, son, sister, and so on.) They then transfer some of the information to the tabulation entitled Where I am: likes and dislikes (Handout 4), and discuss and think aloud about what they like and don't like about features of their identity.

The activity may finish with the creation of self-portrayals though the medium of collages, or with self-descriptions on MySpace or Bebo, or else through portfolios of photographs.

Comments

A youth worker who used this activity at a start of a residential away-weekend wrote: 'They enjoyed listening to each other's answers and the reasons. They were comfortable to talk in front of everybody. They learnt about themselves and each other, things they would not normally ask themselves or friends. The session was a simple one but effective'.

Development

The same or similar questions can be used to conduct a survey, leading to a report or exhibition.

Websites containing the voices and views of young Muslims include those of Muslim Youth, based in London, and This is Where I Need to Be, based in New York. The addresses are in Appendix E.

Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 2 Questions, Interests and Concerns

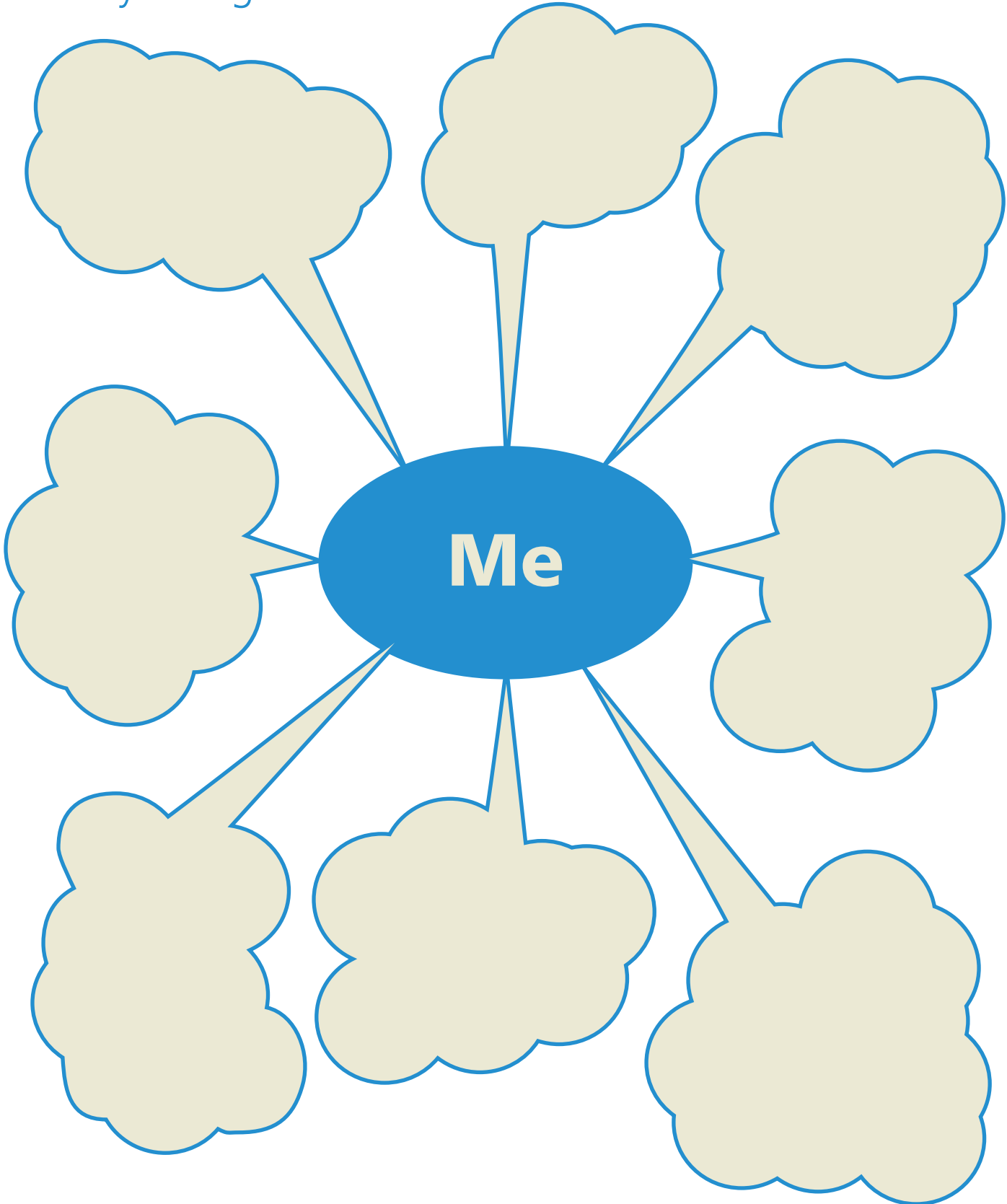
1. When were you most happy?
2. What is your earliest memory?
3. Who or what has had the greatest influence on you?
4. What are your three favourite pieces of music?
5. What are your three favourite movies?
6. Which country would you like to live in if you couldn't live here?
7. What do you like about yourself?
8. What do you dislike about yourself?
9. What makes you angry?
10. How religious are you?
11. Where do you like to hang out?
12. What keeps you awake at night?
13. What one thing would improve your quality of life right now?
14. Which of the following would you most like to be in 10 years time: a) rich, b) happily married, c) famous, d) in good health, e) well travelled, f) with a fulfilling job? Can you put these six in order of preference?
15. Has anyone ever been unkind or vicious to you because of the colour of your skin or because of your religion?
16. If you could meet the Prime Minister, what would you ask him to do?
17. Who are your heroes and heroines? If you could meet one of them, what would you like to know about them?
18. Was either of your parents and any of your grandparents born outside Britain? If so, what are their first memories of coming to this country?

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Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 3

Key Things About Me





Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 4

Who and What I Am: Likes and Dislikes

Aspects of who and where I am	Things I like about this	Things I'd like to be different