

## Activity 6

### What should I say, what should I do?

– situations, scenarios and sorting things out

#### Summary

Young people discuss real or imagined incidents where there is uncertainty about what should happen next. They write letters or messages to a helpline, blog or agony column, and discuss and draft possible answers. Also, they consider where they themselves would turn for advice, assistance and guidance on matters such as those raised by the stories. They evaluate the real answers given on similar topics in Muslim magazines or on Muslim websites.

#### Why?

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

- appreciate that citizenship is to do with making decisions in concrete situations and that sometimes, or usually, there are competing pressures, demands and principles
- have enhanced motivation to learn as a consequence of feeling that the difficulties and dilemmas they encounter in their own everyday lives are recognized and taken seriously
- practise moral reasoning skills by listening to, and being challenged by, each other, as distinct from being told the correct answers by an authority figure
- gain in readiness to look critically at the influences and pressures they experience, and in resilience and strength to withstand those they consider harmful
- are invited but not compelled to talk about sensitive and controversial issues that they might otherwise be inclined to avoid
- use their imaginations to consider other people's experiences in order to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are different from their own

- develop skills in giving advice, guidance and counselling to each other
- have enhanced self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities to learn and to make a difference
- feel they are respected and trusted, and that they are recognized as having views and opinions which are worth attending to
- are better prepared to deal with problems which may arise in their own lives – 'forewarned is forearmed'.

#### Preparation

You need a set of stories. These should ideally reflect the interests and life situations of the young people with whom you are working. It's worth making the stories as short as possible and to provide no more than the minimum of background detail. Also, it's useful to imply or state in each instance that something has got to be said or done immediately, on the spur of the moment. What should I say now, this moment? What should I do now, this moment? The answer to both these questions may, of course, be 'Nothing!'

The selection in Handout 9 shows one possible style to aim for.

#### Procedure

Working in the first instance as individuals or in pairs or threes, young people choose which stories they would like to discuss further, with a view to getting clarity on what should be said and done, and why.

Having made their choice or choices, they discuss a story in a reasonably structured way, as follows:

- What, if anything, should be said or done immediately, on the spur of the moment?

- What should be done or said in the next few hours and days?
- What should be done in the coming months?
- How might this situation have been avoided?
- What are the implications and action points for real everyday life?

It may be relevant and valuable if young people consider, in relation to each story they discuss, who they themselves would turn to for advice if they found themselves in a similar situation. For example, which three of the following would they probably turn to? Which would they definitely not consider approaching, on the grounds that the advice wouldn't be of much use?

- An imam?
- A Muslim teacher or youth leader?
- A non-Muslim teacher you like and trust?
- Your parents?
- An older brother or sister?

- A Muslim friend?
- A non-Muslim friend?
- The Internet?
- A Muslim helpline?
- A non-Muslim helpline?
- Someone else?

### Comment

A youth worker involved in the piloting of this pack wrote: 'The session was well received by the young people. They loved the scenarios, they enjoyed the discussions in the groups and then in the larger groups when feeding back.... They learnt not to judge people, that we can easily judge people on stereotypes. To think before you act ... they found this really interesting and fun, they really got into the discussion and I enjoyed playing devil's advocate. It was also good to see the quieter members of the group participate. Because the discussion was mainly centred around discrimination they all felt very passionately about the issue, as they have either experienced this themselves or know someone who has'.



## Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 10

### What Next?

#### Not serving you

I'm in a newsagents when a woman comes in wearing full hijab. 'You should not be allowed,' says the man behind the counter. 'I'm not serving you. Get out of my shop.'

#### Pack of Islamophobes

I ask a friend if he got the job he was interviewed for. 'No, they were a pack of Islamophobes, that's why.' I ask if that was the reason they gave. 'No, the reason they gave was a) I turned up late, b) I let my mobile phone go off twice whilst the interview was taking place and c) I didn't answer any of their questions. But their real reason, no doubt about it, was Islamophobia. They just don't like Muslims, they won't have Muslims working for them, and that's that.'

#### You can't go

My best friend isn't a Muslim. A few days ago her grandmother died and the funeral is later this week. My friend hasn't ever been to a funeral before and she's worried sick about it. Plus, she's really upset about her nan. She's asked me to go with her. I mention this to someone else. 'You can't go,' they say. 'It's *haram*.'

#### No help at all

I get grief from non-Muslim friends because I don't want to do drugs and alcohol, and stuff. But they're friends and I like hanging out with them. I ask the imam for advice and he just says live in peace with them, but don't live like them. Keep yourself holy and separate. I feel this is no help, no help at all.

#### A very bad Muslim

A Muslim friend of mine says all kuffars will go to hell when they die, even those who are religious and decent. I say that I can't believe this. I'd rather join them in hell, I say, than be separated from them. She says, well in that case I'm a very bad Muslim.

#### Goes ballistic

A group of us in the school playground are talking about football. A teacher approaches. 'What are you boys talking about?' she asks. 'Don't worry, miss,' says Tariq, who's always ready with a quick answer. 'We're just planning the next 9/11.' The teacher goes ballistic and says we've all got to go and see the headteacher. Why do so few white teachers have a sense of humour?

#### Only a phase

A friend says: 'As you know, I'm a convert, or revert, and I get extra hassle 'cos I'm white and a Muslim. People who aren't Muslims make even more fun of me than Muslims do sometimes. They think it's only a phase and don't take me seriously, some of my family too.'

#### No need to obey

My older brother is giving me a lift in his car. We come to some traffic lights, which are red. He looks both ways, sees nothing is coming, and drives straight across with the lights still red. 'It's a kuff law,' he says. 'No need for us Muslims to obey it.'

**A bit of teasing**

A friend tells me she's being teased by other girls. 'We killed hundreds of your lot yesterday ... Osama bin Laden's your dad, innit ... we're getting our revenge for what you lot did to us in Afghanistan last week ...' I ask if she has told her class teacher. Yes, she's told her teacher, and her teacher said: 'Never mind, it's not serious. It'll soon pass. You'll have to expect a bit of teasing at times like this.'

**Back door**

My mother's a school governor. She proposes, following discussions with pupils and parents, that there should be some Islamic Awareness classes at the school on a voluntary basis. 'We'd just be letting Al Qaeda in by the back door,' says the chair. The other governors all seem to agree, or anyway not to bother.

**Crying his eyes out**

My next-door neighbours are white. The other day their little girl comes up to me, crying her eyes out. She goes: 'The Pakis are coming, the Pakis are coming'. I sit her down and calm her and get her to explain. She refers to two aeroplanes that have flown low over our area and says she believes they were piloted by terrorists on their way to attack our street.

**Get on with your work**

A Year 8 RE lesson. We're copying pictures of Hindu gods into our books. 'These are the people who crashed the planes into the twin towers, aren't they, miss?' says someone. 'No, Jeanette,' she replies. 'That was Muslims, we're doing Hindus. Just get on with your work.'

**Pakistan next month**

My uncle tells me he's paying for me to go to Pakistan next month. I'm thrilled. I haven't ever been there and have always wanted to go and meet my relatives, and see the beautiful land my mum and dad came from, so many years ago. 'Thank you so much, Chachaji.' He replies saying that whilst there I'm going to get engaged and there'll probably be a *nikah* as well.

**Anything**

'Can I tell you a secret?' asks a friend. 'Yes.' 'Promise you won't tell anyone?' 'Yeah, promise.' 'Well, I've met this amazing guy. He understands everything so well. My problems, yours, everyone's. The worldwide influence of Kuffars has got to be eliminated. It may sound weird to you, but it all makes really good sense when he says it. Next week I'm going to a training camp with him. I think I'd do anything for the Muslim cause – anything, you know what I mean?'

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