

Self Evaluation and Sensitivity

A Warm-up Activity

Imagine the world is coming to an end, and you have the power to shortlist 7 people to go on a special spaceship designed to preserve human life. Who would you send?

Remember that in all there are 15 people left on earth, and you have to decide which of these 7 can continue to live, and which 8 will have to die.

Here is the list of 15 persons:

1. Artist
2. Teacher
3. Doctor
4. Engineer
5. Poet
6. A sick person
7. Mother
8. Three-year-old child
9. Security guard
10. Singer
11. Sweeper
12. Politician
13. Religious leader
14. Farmer
15. A 95-year-old person

Form groups of 5 - 10 and decide who should go and who must stay and die. You only have 10-15 minutes to decide. You can help 7 persons to survive!

After this process is completed, have a discussion in the larger group about the basis of selection of some people who got chosen and those who were to be left behind.

Some fresh information arrived about some of the ‘candidates’. Examine this information carefully, and feel free to change the initial decision about the nominations for the spaceship.

1. The artist has severe mood swings.
2. The teacher works for inter-faith unity.
3. The doctor was arrested for a wrongly done surgery.
4. The engineer has a fake degree.
5. The poet has a Master's degree in aeronautics.
6. The ill-person collects and donates basic medicines to the needy.
7. The mother hates her children.
8. The three-year old child is suffering from a rare disease.
9. The security guard volunteers as a teacher in a slum.
10. The singer has lost her voice.
11. The sweeper doubles as a compounder at a doctor's clinic in the evenings.
12. The politician is an ardent campaigner for women's rights.
13. The religious leader has rational views about everything.
14. The farmer uses genetically modified seeds.
15. The old person is the only one who has knowledge of the cure for the child's rare disease.

We have a strong feeling in favour of or against one group of people, or one side in an argument, which is often not based on fair judgment.

Explore biases around gender, caste, profession, age, etc.

A range of previously unacknowledged biases will crop up as the discussion moves further, and participants have a chance to learn a lot about themselves. For example, you will find that only a few wanted to send the 95 year-old on the spaceship. "That person is going to die soon. Why should we take her/him?" would be the usual arguments. Perhaps everyone wanted to take the three-year-old until the news of the rare disease. Most people do not want to take the politician either. Why?

Acknowledging one's biases is a good first step. Intolerance of every kind emanates from the biases. We have to revive the culture of tolerance and peace in the world that has historically existed in South Asia where several religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrian, Islam, Sikhism, Bahai Faith), have coexisted for centuries through protocols of mutual respect.

Every soul is to be held in high esteem,

Hearts should be free of hate, and everybody respected,

In this war to attain respect, we are all on the same side.

Further discuss how love and compassion for all can reduce tensions in society.

Note for Teachers

Positive Reinforcement is very important. Schools give away prizes, medals, trophies and certificates for academic performance and extracurricular activities. How about rewarding, students who stand up against hate speech of various kinds with as much applause? Students who:

- who are always ready to help
- resolve conflicts between other students
- reach out to those who are excluded from games
- who switch off lights and fans that aren't being used
- who pick up garbage left over by others.