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Reflection
Topic Ten:
A Pause for Reflection

Often, with the daily rush, we overlook the need to pause. Yet effective leadership requires reflection – taking stock and moving forward thoughtfully.

Reflection is personal and collective. Reflection builds group awareness, what is working well, and how to continually draw upon our abilities to make decisions to effect change.

When is a good time to reflect? Reflection takes place between the YLC stages to consider what is happening and notice how you feel. Also, reflection is best anytime a significant moment occurs: a strong emotion; an accomplishment, or when something is confusing or crystal clear. Involve colleagues, stakeholders and others involved in the reflection process to broaden the shared learning and experience.

Introducing Reflection to Your YLC

Step 1
Invite everyone to take a deep centering breath. Repeat three times. This is a “grounding” practice to guide us in being present and remove distractions.

Step 2
State that “reflection” comes from the Latin root reflexio, the act of bending back. Ask everyone to bend back or look back and describe what happens. Write down their comments. You may hear comments like: I see something new, I stretch, it hurts a little, it feels good. Use their words to frame an understanding of reflection as a way to “see something new, stretch or expand how we see what’s around us, and while it could hurt a bit, it ultimately feels good.”

Step 3
Go through a reflection process. Mix it up! Using various approaches to reflection keep us responsive and honest. Sometimes reflection is written or spoken; sometimes it is drawn or silent. Sometimes it’s a lyric to a song. Anyone – a facilitator or youth member – can come up with ways to reflect and lead with the group. Some reflection ideas:

• **The Feeling Line** – Create an imaginary line on the floor. Have youth describe four feelings that are in the room. “Place” these on the line. Participants stand on the spot that most connects with how they feel and share thoughts with a partner. Switch the feelings with suggestions from the youth. Repeat.

• **Spoken Word Poem** – Using easel paper and markers, everyone draws in silence as they think about a YLC experience. After a few minutes, each person adds three words anywhere on the paper. Each contributor selects two found words to add to a collective
spoken word poem. Can be done virtually with a shared screen or paper.

- **Four Square Reflection** – Use a blank paper or index card. Create four boxes. Ask participants to label the boxes: What happened? How I feel? Ideas? Questions? All the categories are meant to be open and non-restrictive to allow freedom of expression. Words or drawings can be used to respond.

Sometimes there is confusion about thoughts and feelings. If a youth says or writes, “I feel that . . .” they are expressing a thought rather than a feeling. Model expressing your feelings with words that express emotions, such as “I feel excited,” or “I feel uncertain,” or “I am surprised!” This clarity helps with communication and with reflection.

Change the Four Squares!
Box one: Draw a cloud – What is your vision for YLC?
Box two: Draw a balloon – What is something you can let go of?
Box three: Draw a suitcase – What will you take with you from YLC?
Box four: Draw a shoe – What will you do to take your next step forward?

**More Ideas for Reflection**

**Tip: Write before sharing.**
When youth write down their thoughts or feelings before sharing they most often keep to the integrity of what they wanted to express, rather than being swayed by what is said by their peers.

- **Keep It Simple**
  Take a moment to think about something that has been meaningful during the YLC meeting. Turn and share with another person.

- **A Musical Response**
  After a particularly challenging or celebratory moment, ask everyone to think about song lyrics that resonate with them.

- **A Photo Moment**
  Have youth submit a single photo between meetings that connect to something they are doing in YLC. If possible, have them collected (by a youth) and shown on a tablet or projected for viewing, then discuss.

- **What’s the Question?**
  Ask youth to express what they are thinking about or feeling in the form of a question and write it down. Collect all the questions and have youth randomly select one and respond to a partner.
• **Relating to a Character or Historical Figure**
If you could describe how you are feeling by identifying a character from a novel or a person from history, who would that be? Why? Discuss with a partner or in a small group.

• **A Collaborative Poem**
Hand out strips of paper. Have youth write two lines. The first begins “I used to be...” and the second begins “but now I am...” Collect the strips and then read aloud this collaborative poem of transformation.
Demonstration
Topic Eleven:
Share Your Story through Demonstration

Demonstration is all about sharing your story. This can occur in-person and virtually. What is your YLC story about?

Your YLC Story can include:

- How the YLC members have come to know each other and work together.
- What the YLC members have learned about the host organization and how they interact to meet the needs of New Yorkers.
- How the youth have learned about the community including any information and data gathered from community mapping.
- What the youth have discovered about assets and needs.
- Ideas that youth have gained by interacting with community members.
- Ways the youth envision making New York City a more fair and just community by taking action through policy, practice and/or advocacy.
- What has been contributed and accomplished through the YLC.
- Acknowledgment of the leadership skills learned through the YLC program.
Who wants to know your YLC story? Consider sharing your story within your host organization and with any community members who have participated in surveys or interviews.

Your YLC may want to share this with others including:

- classes at school
- family members
- elected officials and their staff
- other YLCs.

Draw upon group creativity to capture your YLC story. This can take many forms, including:

- A video with multiple voices
- Photo essay
- Newsletter article
- Display on poster board

The NYC Service YLC Staff will be available to assist you in this process and inform you about how to submit your demonstration content.

Through demonstration, youth can look back and see all that has been learned and contributed. Enjoy the process of telling the story!