

RESPONSIBILITY AND COMPASSION

Purpose

This activity builds on the Who Am I opener and asks you to think about your sense of responsibility to your community at the local, national, and global scales. By looking at your level of responsibility and compassion in relation to communities at various scales, you'll begin to see how interconnected we all are, but also how humans can sometimes be passionate about their local community or nation while also being critical or judgmental of others outside of these communities. This can lead people both to value their community or nation over all others and turn away other forms of identity and community.

Process

1. Do you feel the same level of responsibility and compassion toward your nation as you do for your local community or family? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel the same level of responsibility and compassion toward the entire world as you do toward your country?

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3. How does your sense of responsibility change as the scale moves from yourself and your family to the entire world?

4. Do you think your level of responsibility and compassion for those far outside your local community is the same as that of people living in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries? That is, do you think people in the past felt like you do about those far outside their local communities? Or do you think this is a relatively recent way of thinking? Explain your reasoning.

5. The idea of belonging to a nation and being willing to fight and die for it is a relatively modern idea. People living before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thought of themselves in a much more local way. Their sense of community was often much smaller. Why do you think that might have been the case and what do you think caused the changes in the ways we view our obligation to our national community?