



SESSION F Gender Issues

RATIONALE/GOAL

Gender is a defining part of each person's identity. This session is geared toward helping volunteers to understand how their gender has affected their behavior and choices.

OPENING PRAYER

A support person or community member should lead prayer for this session.

PROCESS

(One person reads the following section.)

The issue of gender stirs powerful images in all of us. Whether we identify as male or female, certain expectations are imposed on us. We play roles in our lives that often mirror societal expectations. Are these roles learned, innate or both? We don't often take the time to sort through these roles, and yet we may feel trapped when expected to perform in certain ways in certain situations.

Gender affects community life, from deciding who performs day-to-day chores to understanding the different ways men and women communicate and address conflict. JVC challenges volunteers to expand their understanding of others beyond gender-expected roles and to realize that gender socialization often affects how we communicate with people, and how we listen when others try to communicate with us.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

Take a few minutes to think about this question: How has being male or female empowered you and why?; how has this hindered you?

Everyone should address the following questions:

1. Growing up, were there certain expectations for the boys in the house and the girls in the house?
2. Do you try to live up to these expectations? Why or why not?
3. Do these expectations free or limit you?
4. What does it mean to be male? female? Are men and women viewed differently in our

culture than in other cultures? In what way(s)?

5. Do people of one gender in your household tend to do more kitchen-oriented things while others do more repair/yard work? If so, are people comfortable with this or is there some resentment?
6. Do you feel community members can address these issues openly? Why or why not?

CLOSING PRAYER

We are as you have made us--we belong heart and soul to this earth.

Keep us in this grace, make us faithful to your creation and teach us to recognize, in gratitude and delight, that everything that you have done is good: today, tomorrow, and unto the end of the ages. Amen.