

## Personal Reflection Activity: Timeline

*Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.*

### ✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Make two small signs to hang up on two opposite facing walls in your room. One should say "TODAY" and the other should say "THE DAY YOU WERE BORN."

### GOALS FOR THIS SECTION:

- ▶ Make space for people to think individually about their own worldview in a way that separates the need for expertise from the willingness to enter into interfaith experiences
- ▶ Help participants reflect on how their experiences have shaped their perceptions of people of different worldviews

### ⇒ INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

**Tell participants:** We often think we have to be "experts" on religion or know everything there is to know about our traditions in order to engage worldview. This is one of the reasons why interfaith dialogue is often seen as something that only happens between religious leaders and religious scholars.

But the truth is, anyone can participate in this work because everyone is an expert on their own experience. You are only required to speak for yourself, not for your tradition. You are not required to represent your entire tradition, only the way that it manifests in your life.

That said, it is important to do some personal work to explore your beliefs and your identities. This exercise will help.

### TIMELINE EXERCISE (40 minutes)

This exercise is a reflection on personal experiences and formative moments that is done as a group. It is best for people who have done some prior work/reflection about their worldview and groups with low levels of trust established.

Note that you can change the time frame and the questions in accordance with the needs of the group (e.g. condensing to 'time in college' instead of lifespan).

You will need an open, furniture-free space with two walls at each end. Participants will need to be able to stand, walk back and forth, and be able to hear/see question prompts from the facilitator(s). Please make appropriate arrangements for people needing accommodation to participate.

**Explain exercise.**

**Designate one wall as "TODAY." Designate another wall as "THE DAY YOU WERE BORN."**

**Tell participants:** We're going to do some reflection as a group about the watershed moments in our lives that have influenced both our own worldview development and how we see the worldview of others. This is an exercise we will do as a group, and I will invite people to share their stories as they feel comfortable. I will pose a series of questions to you, and you will place yourself on the timeline of your life as appropriate. Imagine the space between the two walls marked "today" and "the day you were born" is a continuum of your lifespan. If you are 40 years old, the middle of the room would be 20 years old, so if you experienced something at 20, that's where you will stand. You may be able to point to multiple instances in your life when these things have happened for you. As I ask you questions, position yourself based on your most salient memory.

## LEAD EXERCISE

**Read through the questions below, allowing approximately five minutes of conversation and reflection for each.**

**Prompt participants to stand on a moment in their life:**

- ▶ When I first learned there were different belief systems.
- ▶ When I first remember clearly identifying with the worldview identity I hold.
- ▶ When I first remember questioning the worldview I grew up in/around.
- ▶ When I first identified a powerful commonality with someone of another worldview.

**After posing each question, allow participants to place themselves on the timeline and then ask participants:** Would anyone be willing to share briefly the story of where you are standing? Why was this moment in time what came to you? How did you feel at that moment? What would have helped you navigate it?

## DEBRIEF (15 minutes)

**Invite participants to take their seats.**

The goal of this discussion is to steer the group toward the understanding that worldview engagement is about personal narrative, and that we often have more in common than we think we do. This area of identity does not require theological expertise to explore; you only have to be an expert in your own experience.

**Tell participants:** I would like to get a feel from all of you about how this exercise went.

**Potential debrief questions, select a few:**

- ▶ Was it difficult to remember these points in your life?
- ▶ Were they easy to talk about?
- ▶ Did you hear any elements of your experience in the experiences of your colleagues?
- ▶ What takeaways can you draw from this kind of activity?

**Tell participants:** Our worldviews are complex and we have experiences that influence our orientation toward others. It's important to note that worldview engagement is high stakes, and we all have experiences that we bring into the space. But ultimately you are only responsible for speaking from your own experience. Thank you for your vulnerability during this exercise!

***If you are ending the entire session here...***

**Tell participants:** Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!