GLOBAL DIGNITY DAY

TOOLKIT
A BASIC INTRODUCTION
2012 | updated 2018

This Toolkit has been created to give you as a volunteer organizer a brief introduction into Global Dignity Day and your role and responsibilities. It also provides background information on the Global Dignity initiative and relevant information on the concept of dignity. We hope it is helpful as you set out to organize a Global Dignity Day event in your community.

We so appreciate your involvement in organizing Global Dignity Day. Your contribution will be of tremendous importance to the young people participating in the event. Hopefully it will mean something to you, too. In fact, over these last ten years, many of our Country Chairs, Partner Organizations and volunteer leaders in over 70 countries around the world tell us that participating in Global Dignity events was one of the most moving and powerful experiences they have experienced.

Best of luck!

Definition of Roles:

- **Main Facilitator or Organizer:** The Global Dignity representative who leads the activities in the plenary and serves as Master or Mistress of Ceremonies. Can also serve as a facilitator for a classroom or small group session.

- **Facilitators:** The volunteers who lead the sessions in the classrooms or small group gatherings.

- **School or Organization Coordinator:** Responsible for the practical aspects of implementing a Dignity Day event at the school, a non-profit organization, or in the community.

Global Dignity Day

Global Dignity Day is an international day for dignity, observed around the world on the third Wednesday of October each year. Dignity Day events are held at schools or in the community, and feature a course consisting of interactive group discussions about dignity, where young people (and any participant) define what dignity means for them and share stories about dignity from their own experiences. In 2016, over 485,000 young people participated in Global Dignity Days, Dignity Workshops and Events in over 70 countries around the world.

Our Principles

The first step for anyone organizing a Global Dignity Day event is to take the time to reflect on Global Dignity’s Principles, which were adopted by our new Board of Directors in November 2017. We want to make sure you understand and support the Principles, as they are the foundation of our vision, values and everything we do.

*Our work is guided by a simple set of principles, that every person:*

1. Has the right to pursue their purpose and meaning in life, and to reach their full potential.

2. Deserves to live in societies that provide humane access to education, health, income and security.

3. Has their life, identity and beliefs respected by others.
Our Principles, continued

4. Has the responsibility to create the conditions for others to fulfill their potential, acting to strengthen the dignity of others.

5. Believes that dignity in action means standing up against injustice, intolerance and inequality.

An Overview of a Global Dignity Day Event

Dignity Day events are organized by volunteer facilitators. Most often the Day begins with an Opening Assembly, and then everyone meets in smaller groups in classrooms or other small group settings. The design of the Day, the preparations, planning and implementation is done in close cooperation with the head of the school, the director of the nonprofit or any community-based organization you are working with. In schools, it is important to involve the teachers. Teachers can facilitate the classroom small group interactive part of the day.

Dignity Day events can happen in elementary schools, middle and upper secondary schools. They can happen with youth and community-based organizations, in refugee camps and communities. Some of our Country Chairs have organized Global Dignity events in Youth Prisons. Others have used the Dignity Curriculum in Senior Centers, homes for the disabled, in community health care clinics.

There are many ways of “Teaching Dignity.” This Toolkit has is a step-by-step guide that captures what has worked in many of our local Global Dignity countries around the world. If you want do things differently please feel free to do so. Just remember to stay within the spirit of the dignity principles.

The goals of Teaching Dignity and Global Dignity Day:

- Young people will learn about the importance of dignity in their own lives and the lives of others.
- They will learn to express in their own words what dignity means for them and their lives.
- They will learn about how their own dignity is mutually dependent on the dignity of others.
- Students will name something they are for and what they want to do during the course of the next year to strengthen the dignity of others, putting “dignity into action.”

Dignity Day consists of Three Main Parts:

| 1. Introduction in a large Plenary Session | The head of the school opens the day An external speaker or role model frames Dignity Day and the concept of dignity Show one of our Global Dignity videos A student at the school, or young person in the Community tells a dignity story | 3 min 10 min 2 min 5 min |
### 2. Discussion in Classrooms or Small Group Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The facilitator or teacher introduces her/himself and the goals of the course</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students and young people define dignity in their own words</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students and young people share stories of dignity</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people write a letter to themselves (Optional)</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Stories of Dignity shared in the Closing Plenary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction by the external facilitator</td>
<td>2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected students/young people share their stories of dignity with everyone</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing remarks by the head of the school or nonprofit</td>
<td>3 min</td>
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A Dignity Day event is always more successful if the school or organization’s leadership team is involved, when the teachers and/or staff are willing to put in some work before and after the event and if the students and young people are prepared for the day itself.

It is an advantage if the young people are acquainted in advance with Global Dignity’s five Dignity Principles and with the purpose for the event and small group discussions. It is important to create an atmosphere of trust so some students might open up and talk about something that is difficult for them. The school or community group should be prepared for that so that every young person feels supported.

**Introduction in the Opening Plenary – 30 minutes**

**Preparations:**

- The hall should be large enough to accommodate all the students – or participants if the Dignity Day is being organized in the community, teachers and facilitators.

- Technical equipment should be checked to make sure it is in working order (microphones, sound equipment, and video projector if videos are to be shown.)

- The students (or participants) should know which group they will be in, and teachers and facilitators should be easily visible, so that everyone can move quickly and efficiently into the classrooms or small group meeting rooms.

**Activities:**

- The head of the school or the community organization, or the Global Dignity Country Chair opens the day by welcoming everyone and explaining why the school is holding a Dignity Day event. At this stage it is good idea to cite relevant school or nonprofit activities that the school is involved in and that relate to dignity, (anti-bullying programs, service projects, friendship schools, etc.) *(3 minutes)*

- The main facilitator or organizer explains what Dignity Day is, provides the background on Global Dignity, and introduces the other presenters and talks about the concept of dignity. The points you might include:
  
  - Dignity comes from human worth and is intrinsic to all people.
We can all enhance our own dignity and that of other people through our choices and actions.

In our society, we need more reflection and discussion about dignity, as well as a commitment to moving the dignity values into action, to strengthen our communities.

Maybe show a short video that you think might inspire the participants. You will find many videos on our website www.globaldignity.org

Many of our leaders suggest that inviting an inspirational role model – a civic or business leader, or an artist or musician for example, who can share a powerful story about what dignity means to them, adds tremendous value to the Opening Plenary. 

(10 minutes)

• **One of the students/young person** tells a dignity story that he/she has prepared in advance. This must be well thought out so that it strikes the right chords in terms of the concept of dignity and gives the young people inspiration for the discussions in the classrooms and small group sessions. Look for an emotional story that is positive and empowering.

(5 minutes)

• **The main facilitator** concludes the Opening Plenary or Assembly by thanking everyone and letting them know when they should be back in the main hall again. The facilitator explains briefly what is going to happen in the classrooms or small group sessions, and in the Closing Plenary session afterwards.

(2 minutes )

*Note: Allow enough time for everyone to go from the plenary session to the places for their small group discussions.*

**Small Group Discussion – 60 minutes**

*Preparations:*

• All the classrooms should have a blackboard or a flip chart.

• The students need paper and pens.

• There should be a box available for the letters that the students write to go in, if you decide to use that idea.

• It is a good idea to have the 5 Dignity Principles posted visibly and creatively, and ideally the telacher or facilitator should have spent some time reviewing them before the Dignity Day event. It is also helpful if the students/young people have been asked to think of examples from their own experiences or stories that illustrate what dignity means for them.

• The tables in the small meeting rooms or classrooms should be arranged so that the students can work in groups, with 4-6 students in each group.

• Make sure that you collaborate closely with the teacher or small group facilitator – one of you can write notes on the board while the other leads the discussion. Both should go around the room when the students are having discussions in their small groups. Keep in mind that the teacher or nonprofit leader knows the students/young people well and knows if anyone require extra support because of the personal nature of the discussions or for any other reason.
Small Group Interactive Sessions:

- Start by giving a brief introduction about yourself and why you are there. If you want you can give examples of stories from your own life in which dignity is the theme. (5 minutes)

- Ask the students/young people to define dignity in their own words. Let them share their stories in groups of about 4-6 for five minutes first before continuing the discussion with the whole class. Write down the various ideas that come up on the board/flip chart. Useful questions/points for discussion:
  - Which of the Dignity Principles apply to the specific ideas that have emerged?
  - Explore some of the most complicated ideas more deeply, so that everyone shares the same understanding, (respect, status, compassion, tolerance and openness.)
  - Can our actions enhance the dignity of others? Make it clear how our own dignity is mutually dependent on the dignity of others. (15 minutes)

- Ask the students/young people to tell stories about dignity from their own experience and to give examples of incidents where someone was helped and their dignity strengthened. A dignity story can be ‘big’ (my father saved an entire village from being flooded) or ‘small’ (I helped an elderly woman with her suitcase up on the bus). Encourage the ‘small’ stories. Emphasise that the ‘small’ stories are just as important as the big ones because the world is made up of all the small things. That is how we move the world forward.

  Let the students/young people discuss this for 10 minutes first in groups of 4-6 students before allowing those who want to, to share their story with the rest of the group.

  - Make sure that you and the teacher (and any other facilitators present) go around the classroom and listen to the stories being told. An open and trusting atmosphere is essential. It takes courage to talk about personal experiences and it is important to provide encouragement and support.

  - Make note of the stories you think could be best to share in the plenary session at the end.
    - Remember that a dignity story is a positive story about people that get their dignity strengthened.
    - The stories we are looking for serve as positive examples we can learn from and be inspired by.
    - Stories about serious law violations or about physical or sexual abuse are not what we are looking for, especially not for the plenary.
    - Remember also to protect the third party (people that are mentioned in the story).

- Ask the students/young people who want to share their stories to the rest of the class. Try to make sure there is enough time for this. (15 minutes)
• Ask the students/young people to write down something they are for when they think about the dignity values and principles, and what they are going to do during the course of the next month to increase someone else’s dignity. Then have them fold up what they have written and write their names on the sheet. Talk to the teacher/facilitator about the idea of keeping the letters in a box, to be passed out a month from Dignity Day.

Take a moment to encourage anyone who wants to share their ideas on what they stand for and believe in when they think about dignity, and what they plan to do during the next month to increase the dignity of others.

(15 minutes)

• While everyone is writing letters to themselves, talk to the young people/students who have told moving stories of dignity that might be wonderful to share in the Closing Plenary Session. Discuss this first with the teacher or facilitator for the group. This can be done in three ways: 1) the student tells the story him/herself 2) the facilitator tells the story with the student standing by his/her side 3) The facilitator tells the story but the student remains anonymous. Try to get 2-3 stories from each small group session. A total of 10 short dignity stories tends to work well.

Note: Remember to allow time for going from the classroom to the plenary hall! 10 minutes

Stories of Dignity in the Closing Plenary Session– 30 minutes

Preparations:

• Technical equipment should be checked to make sure it is in working order.

• The students /young people who have been asked to tell their stories should be ready, and near the stage.

• The facilitators from the small group sessions stand by the line of students, ready to help them if they get nervous.

• If any other students/young people suddenly wish to tell their stories, it is important that the facilitator or teacher from the respective small group session checks with them about which story he/she wants to share, and then advise the student to go ahead or not.

Activities | Closing Plenary Session:

• The main facilitator who introduced the Opening Plenary Session, comes onto the stage and explains what is to happen: we are going to hear a variety of stories, some very personal, others of a more general nature, but all of them are about what dignity means to each one of us.

  o Emphasise to everyone that it takes a lot of courage to come up on stage.

  o Ask the audience to applaud and show their appreciation for each story.

  o Then ask the students to come up and take the microphone, one at a time.

  o The stories stand alone and need no comment. Each student shakes the main facilitator’s hand and goes down from the stage. It is important that this is done quickly and efficiently so that there are no breaks between the stories.
Closing Plenary Session, continued

If any of the students/young people suffers a mental block, take the microphone and stress again how much courage it takes to stand up there on the stage in front of all the other students, ask for a round of applause and ask them if he/she is now ready.

o If any of the stories becomes too personal or if the young person does not manage to bring the story to a close, try to find an appropriate moment to interrupt him/her politely by asking for applause and thank the student warmly for the story.

o The Main facilitator/MC wraps up the session.

(25 minutes)

• The head of the school or community organization sums up the day and thanks everyone.

(5 minutes)

Note: Many local Global Dignity Leaders have incorporated variations on this general framework for a Global Dignity Day. Watching a film that illustrates the dignity values, and then moving into the small group interactive discussions, or starting and closing with an inspirational story of dignity from a local leader who is respected in the community, or a musician with a message that aligns to the theme – and values, of dignity.

Appendix 1: Practical Arrangements

Practical tasks and preparations
The school will have organised all necessary equipment for implementation of the event beforehand. This means that classrooms or small group meeting rooms will be equipped with:

• A blackboard/flip chart.
• Pens, paper, envelopes and a box for storing the letters written by the students to themselves.
• Programme for the classroom session, and the five Dignity Principles displayed on the board or on the wall.
• The tables in the classrooms will be arranged so that the students can work in groups, with 4-6 students in each group.

The plenary room will be arranged with signs and enough chairs for the participating classes, as well as with all necessary technical equipment.

The students/young people will have been properly prepared for the event, so most everyone will already have begun to think about the concept of dignity.

Our Expectations
As Facilitator we expect you to:

• Prepare yourself for Global Dignity Day (attend the training meeting and make any individual preparations you need).
• Prepare one to two stories of dignity to share in the small group sessions to inspire them to share their own stories.
• Complete a brief evaluation of Global Dignity Day to share with the local organizer of the Day.
Appendix 2: Additional information on the Facilitator’s role

General advice:

Rules for the classroom/small group sessions
Starting the session by defining what needs to be done for the group to work well creates a feeling of security and paves the way for participation and openness. A good question to start with would be: What is needed to make this an enjoyable day and a good learning experience? If necessary, pose a second question, such as: What do we need to be aware of, for example are there any specific rules to follow, to create a good, lively atmosphere?

Encouraging everyone to participate
Students and young people are often eager to participate in Dignity Day events, and some very moving stories are shared. However, you will likely find that there are certain students whose minds are elsewhere and who are harder to engage. Your challenge is to ensure that there is room for everyone to participate, regardless of their starting point, and to encourage and help everyone to be responsible for their own participation in the event.

It has been said that a facilitator’s role is to reflect on dignity with the rest of the group. Below are some good questions that can facilitate individual reflection and discussion:

- Make things concrete: If a student/young person has mentioned the word respect, for example, ask that student: What does the word respect mean for you? Can you give us any specific examples?
- Involve more than one student/young person What do others of you in the group think about this?
- Look for agreement or support in the group: Does anyone else feel the same?
- Make the topic immediately relevant: How does this manifest itself among you as a group?

“What if?”

Sometimes situations may arise that disrupt the process or create a negative mood in the small group sessions. This could be noise or other disruptions, unfavourable reactions to the program, passivity or someone doing something antagonistic to someone else.

Because every situation is different, it is difficult to give any fixed answers in terms of what one should say or do when dealing with this kind of response. Mentors also have different personalities and ways of expressing themselves, so they must deal with the situation in a way that feels natural to them. We can only give you a “compass” to steer by, as well as some general suggestions that support the role of facilitator:

- A Dignity Day event is all about dignity: The way in which you approach the young people must foster both your own and their dignity. Students often associate the concept of dignity with words such as respect, a feeling of security, and compassion. Make an effort to demonstrate this in practice – regardless of whether the session is going smoothly or whether you are encountering resistance.
- Do not pick up the gauntlet unless it is absolutely unavoidable. If the resistance is “harmless,” cut the young person some slack. Ignore the first signs of resistance. If it happens again, say something, but try to keep your tone warm and friendly, and show that you want everyone to play on the same team. Use humor if you like, but not sarcasm.
• It is often a good idea to consider the situation and ask yourself: Where is the resistance coming from? Is it genuine or am I just reading into things? Ask what is going on and whether you heard things correctly.

• If you are forced to set boundaries, make sure to differentiate clearly between the problem and the person. For example, say, “I would like you to sit together with your group,” rather than, “Can’t you sit still?”

• Be specific and formulate your question in a positive manner (“Could you please...”), not a negative manner (“Would you cut it out”).

• Be firm but not authoritative: As a representative of Global Dignity, it is important that you are open and humble. That being said: a secure mentor is a clear mentor. You must step in and put a stop to any behavior in the group that you think is offending someone’s dignity.

Here are some suggested steps to take in selected situations:

1. Minor disturbances: A student/young person is wandering about, fooling around or giggling, or makes a harmless, silly comment.

   *Suggestion:* Do not make a big deal out of it, but make sure you make friendly eye contact with them. A productive process requires a positive atmosphere; it is most likely best to ignore minor disturbances.

2. The same student/young person creates another disturbance, and you see that it is affecting the process or creating a feeling of anxiety in the room.

   *Suggestion:* Ask the student/young person what is happening. If the students are in the middle of a group exercise, go directly to the student in question and keep your conversation out of earshot of the rest of the group. Avoid analysing or judging the student or the disturbance you are addressing, but tell the student specifically what you saw or heard and why you think it is disrupting the peace and atmosphere of the classroom. Listen closely to the student’s reply. Perhaps a solution will present itself. Ask if there is anything you can do to help the student to return to the task at hand. Even though you are polite and respectful regarding the aim or nature of the disturbance, you should be very clear that the work process has to continue.

3. A lot of students/young people are wandering about or digressing from the task at hand.

   *Suggestion:* Call a time-out. Explain what you have seen or heard and are reacting to. Point out that the group is supposed to follow the rules for the session, and ask what would help the students/young people to be able to do so. Getting them to reflect on the situation usually resolves it. Make sure that you are not standing and arguing on your own. Use the group dynamic; ask several students/young people what they think is needed. As regards the cause of the disturbance:

Once you have the entire group’s attention again, you can also ask why the disturbance arose. Is it difficult to understand the concepts you are discussing or to come up with stories of dignity?

4. Negativity to the program: (“This is sooo boring!” , “I’m not going to sit around and listen to this!”).

   *Suggestion:* Again, address the student/young person who is frustrated. Ask what it is that he/she dislikes about the situation. Listen closely to his/her reply. Be clear that the Dignity Day event is in fact underway and is going to be completed, but find out if there is some way to help him/her to participate within the
set framework. You may also say something about the kind of effect you think such comments are having on the rest of the group and ask him/her to keep them to him/herself. Tell the student/young person that it will be very valuable to get his/her feedback after the event is over, so that it can be used in further developing the Global Dignity Day course.

5. All the students remain silent when you ask a question; there is no activity in the groups.

Suggestion: Silence can mean many things. Perhaps the students/young people just need some time to think. Let them know that you are fine with waiting a bit while they formulate their answers. If the silence lasts too long, ask whether you have expressed yourself clearly when you posed the question. Try to reformulate or add examples.

If you suspect that the students/young people do not feel secure enough to answer in front of the entire class, divide them into small groups. Once they are in groups it will be easy for you to see what is causing the insecurity. The students in certain groups will open up and start working well, while other groups will not function. If in a school classroom, consult with the teacher, who knows the students well, on whether to redivide the groups, whether one of the adults should sit with a group, or whether you need to speak to individual students about what is happening.

If the work is progressing too slowly, you can use one of the activities found at the back of this handbook, and return to the fixed programme afterwards.

6. Denigration is never acceptable! A mentor must make sure that the students in the group feel secure, and must set clear limits regarding denigrating words and actions. It is not acceptable to speak disparagingly about others in the group, the mentor, or about oneself. If a racist, sexist or other derogatory comment is made, you should first ensure that you have heard it correctly. You should then explain why you find the comment offensive, and make it very clear that you will not accept that the students make such comments to each other. You must address such a situation immediately and in a way that students who heard the comment also hear your reaction.

7. A student/young person shares something very private; for example, that he/she is being beaten at home. Quickly stop the student from continuing the story. Say something like: “You are sharing something extremely personal with us, and yours is the kind of story that needs to be listened to much more closely than we have time to do here. Do you think you can wait until after the classroom session, and talk to your counsellor or a counselor.

Appendix 3: Stories of Dignity

Stories of dignity play a central role in the Dignity Day event. They make the discussion about dignity much more tangible and concrete, rather than an abstract, academic debate. Secondly, they provide inspiration. The fact that the stories are often so personal makes the discussion much more engaging and interesting.

A story of dignity relates an experience that shows how dignity can be a guiding principle for our actions. Stories of dignity may refer to times where others have honoured your own dignity or to moments when you have boosted the dignity of others. The aim is to show that the concept of dignity is relevant to us every day, sometimes in very small, but powerful ways.

Examples: Stories of Dignity

To illustrate what is meant by a story of dignity, a few examples of stories written by young people at Dignity Day events follow below. Several YouTube videos of young people telling their stories of dignity are available at www.globaldignity.org. These stories might provide inspiration for you when preparing your own stories of dignity and helping the students with theirs.
“My cousin – and good friend – is bound to a wheelchair. Unfortunately, his school wasn’t designed to accommodate wheelchairs, so he couldn’t access the school canteen upstairs. He had to sit and eat lunch in the classroom all alone, and could not participate in the social gathering that happens at lunch. He made it seem like he preferred to eat in the classroom. He thought it was humiliating and embarrassing to tell his friends that he couldn’t get to the canteen to eat together with them, so he said that he liked to do his homework during the break so he didn’t have to do it later.

Thankfully, his friendship with his classmates was not based on pity. After a while they understood that he didn’t eat in the canteen because he simply could not access it, not because he preferred to eat in the classroom like he said he did. So they decided to sit and eat in the classroom with him. Not because they felt sorry for him or because they wanted to do the right thing, but because they really wanted to be together with him – and he with them.”

(The story has been abridged.)

17 year old girl, Olsvikåsen upper secondary school, Norway

“My story about dignity is about a good friend of mine. He has a younger brother who has an illness that makes him very nervous about new things. His younger brother was supposed to start eighth grade and he was, as I said, very nervous. My friend decided to walk his brother to school for as long as it took for him to feel that he could go on his own. He walked him to school for six months.”

17 years old boy, St Hallvard upper secondary school, Norway

Appendix 4: About Dignity

Each of us, children and adults alike, makes choices that shape us and the world around us every day – in the playground and at work, in our local communities and in global society at large. We have the ability to enhance our own dignity and that of others through the choices we make and the way we use our time and energy. By allowing dignity to be a guiding principle for our actions, we can all contribute to positive global change – at the many different levels of society.

The concept of “dignity” stems from the principle that all human beings have intrinsic worth. This inalienable value belongs to all of us simply by virtue of our being human. Our dignity is strengthened when we feel that our rights and freedom are respected and when we live in a situation where we can make choices and take actions that enhance our self-respect, integrity and humanity

To sum up, we can say that dignity involves three things:

1. That dignity is intrinsic to all of us
2. Human rights – our rights in terms of how we are to be treated, with dignity
3. Our sense of dignity, which is affected by how we treat one another – what we can do to enhance our own dignity and that of others.

For Global Dignity Day the main focus is point 3: the young people’s sense of dignity and how dignity is affected by the way we treat ourselves and others, and how others treat us.

As a mentor you should help the students/young people to begin to reflect on the concept of dignity. It is important to make clear that the task is to consider the essence of the concept, not give a set answer. The evaluations of Global Dignity Day show that students/young people associate dignity primarily with respect, human rights, compassion, understanding and a feeling of security.