



# **UNIQUE AND CONNECTED**

**EXAMINING LABELS  
EXPLORING IDENTITY  
PRACTICING ACCEPTANCE**

## WELCOME!

Hello!

We're so pleased to have you as part of Global Dignity's worldwide community and that you will help your workshop participants explore the powerful concept of **dignity: every person's inherent and equal value**.

Dignity is a quality that every person is born with. **We all matter equally**. Because everyone is equal in their humanity, we all deserve and have the right to be treated well and respectfully. In turn, we all have a responsibility to uphold everyone else's dignity through words and actions.

A deeper understanding of what dignity is and what it looks like in practice **impacts the way we think about ourselves, affects the way we treat one another, and can improve relationships** at home, school, work and in our communities.

## THE WORKSHOP: WHAT AND WHY

We created this easy-to-follow guide to help you facilitate a **Dignity Workshop around the themes of labels, identities and acceptance**. These are important topics for recognizing our own dignity and the dignity of others.

This workshop is designed for **participants ages 12+**. It can take place in any setting, including schools, community and resource centers, workplaces, and virtually.

### **During the workshop, participants—and you, the facilitator!—will explore:**

- the meaning and importance of dignity
- how embracing our own identity is critical to recognizing our inherent dignity
- how accepting others' identities is a way to honor their dignity
- the impact labels can have on the way we and others are treated

### **By the conclusion of the workshop, participants will gain:**

- a stronger sense of their own dignity and the dignity of others
- a better understanding of how we can both celebrate what makes each of us unique and what unites us all

## VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

We know that some of you may still be unable to hold in-person events. All of the activities in this guide can be adapted to virtual settings.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Chart paper, white board or chalk board
- Marker or chalk
- Pen/pencil (for each participant)
- Copies of the "My Identity: What Makes Me, Me!" and "Assumptions Made About Me or My Culture" activities (both are found at the end of this guide) or a piece of paper for each participant
- Projection screen or large monitor for viewing a short video (optional)
- Online meeting software, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams (if holding your workshop virtually)

## A NOTE ON TIMING

Although **the workshop typically lasts 60 minutes**, you should feel free to spend more time on any activity or topic you'd like. You can even hold a follow-up workshop. This is merely a guide...see where your workshop takes you!

**Now, let's get started!**

## 1. BEGINNING TO EXPLORE DIGNITY

### GOAL:

- Begin to define and understand the concept of dignity

STEP 1: Begin the discussion:

Introduce who you are.

Let participants know that you are here to talk to them about something that is really important and that can help them in ways they may not expect: it's called *dignity*.

**Ask everyone to raise their hand if they have ever had these experiences** (only if they are comfortable doing so):

- Have you ever been talked over?
- Have you ever been told you're not good enough?
- Have you ever thought you were in a friendship group and then realized you were not?
- Have you been lied to?
- Has anyone ever been rude to you?
- Have you ever been treated differently because of your skin color, ethnicity or gender?

**Explain that their reaction to any of these experiences was their dignity being hurt.** The message they were hearing at those moments was: "you don't matter."

STEP 2: Now let's think more about what we mean by dignity. **Define dignity** for the group:

- Dignity is something that every person is born with
- Dignity is our inherent value and worth as a human being
- We all matter equally
- Because everyone matters equally, we all deserve and have the right to be treated well and respectfully
- We all also have a responsibility to uphold everyone else's dignity through our words and actions
- When our dignity is hurt, our brains react in the same way as they do to a physical wound...think about that!

## 2. WORD WALL

### GOALS:

- Understand words and concepts related to dignity
- Understand the difference between dignity and respect

STEP 1: Tell participants that now we will think together about words and ideas *related* to dignity.

STEP 2: On chart paper, a white board or chalk board (as large and visible as possible), **you write the word “DIGNITY” at the top or at the center.** If your workshop is virtual, use a virtual white board or the chat function.

STEP 3: Ask participants to share some **examples of words they associate with dignity or how dignity can be shown.** As participants call out their ideas, write them around or beneath the word “DIGNITY.”

You can make it a bit more fun by asking everyone to **close their eyes.** On the count of three, they all yell out **the first word that comes to mind when they think of dignity.** Then, go around the room and ask each person to share their word. This part of the workshop allows participants to relax and get to know you, so have fun with it!

### TIP:

If you start to get the same word, start giving hints. **We're looking for ideas like:** Acceptance, Wellbeing, Kind, Equality, Polite, Human Rights, Courage, Standing Up, Fairness, Love, Compassion, Truthful, Belonging, Help, Listen, Apologize, Keep Your Promises.

## RESPECT VS. RESPECTFUL

"Respect" will likely be one of the first words you hear from the group. This is a great opportunity to explain that the word we're actually looking for is "Respectful." **Explain that *respect* and *respectful* mean two different things.**

**“Respect” is earned.** Not everyone earns our respect, and that's OK.

But **everyone deserves to be treated “respectfully,” simply because they are a human being.** Even those people you do not like, admire or agree with should be treated respectfully. When you are respectful, you are showing your dignity and telling the other person that you know they have dignity too.

It's much easier to be respectful to those we like, and harder with those we don't, so we need to practice it. When we're respectful, it is much easier to resolve arguments and fights. When respectful, you make a stronger statement when you stand up to someone's bad behavior.

### 3. OUR IDENTITIES

#### GOAL:

- Explore how our unique qualities make up who we are—our identities

STEP 1: Distribute a copy of the **"My Identity: What Makes Me, Me!"** activity (found at the end of this guide) to each participant, or copy all of the elements onto chart paper, a white board or chalk board (as large and visible as possible). If participants do not have their own copies of the exercise, have them **copy the elements** onto a piece of paper.

STEP 2: Explain that an essential part of dignity is accepting our own and everyone's **unique qualities and identities**.

- An **identity** is a person's sense of who they are. This is made up of our experiences, values, culture, upbringing and circumstances. Aspects of our identity develop and change over time.

STEP 3: Ask everyone to write **five ways they would describe their identity** in the empty lines on their "My Identity: What Makes Me, Me!" paper. You might give a few examples: sister, son, poet, kind person, good singer.

STEP 4: Invite a few participants to **share their list of qualities with the group**, or everyone can share with a person sitting close by.

## 4. LABELS AND ASSUMPTIONS

### GOAL:

- Think about the way labels and assumptions get in the way of seeing a person's identity and dignity

STEP 1: Explain that now that we understand the importance of accepting our own and others' identities, let's talk about **what gets in the way of seeing someone's dignity.**

- A **label** is a word, phrase or idea used to describe a person. It is usually based on assumptions and tends to put a person in a restrictive category.

Unlike our identities which are complex and take time to understand, labels quickly reduce a person into just one thing (and it's often not even true!)

STEP 2: **Play this video** ([youtube.com/watch?v=84OT0NLlqfM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84OT0NLlqfM)) about assumptions and labels from Coca-Cola Middle East.

STEP 3: Ask the group to **share their thoughts on the video:**

- What were your first thoughts about some of the people in the video? Did your thoughts change?
- Have you ever thought one thing about a person, and that person turned out to be different?
- Have you ever changed your opinion after making an assumption about or labeling someone?

STEP 4: Distribute a copy of the "**Assumptions Made About Me or My Culture**" activity (found at the end of this guide) to each participant, or copy all of the elements onto chart paper, a white board or chalk board (as large and visible as possible). If participants do not have their own copies of the exercise, have them **copy the elements** onto a piece of paper.

STEP 5: Ask participants to **write down some labels or assumptions people have made about them.**

STEP 6: Anyone is welcome to share what they wrote down and how it makes them feel (if they are comfortable).

## 5. HUMAN FIRST AND FOREMOST

STEP 1: Now we understand how important identity is to our dignity and how easy it can be to make false assumptions about people. Let's talk about what we all have in common.

STEP 2: We know what makes each of us unique. **What is it that makes us all the same?** [We are looking for "We are all human" or "We all have dignity," etc.]

STEP 3: Ask everyone to return to their "My Identity: What Makes Me, Me!" activity and **add the word "human"** at the bottom.

### SUGGESTED POINTS:

- As human beings, identity groups are important to us. **It's OK to identify people—but not to label them.**
- **Before anything else, every one of us is a human being.**
- It's so important that we **accept and celebrate everyone's unique qualities and identities.** It's what makes us who we are and part of what makes the world so interesting.
- But it is equally important to remember that **we all share a much larger identity—as a part of the human family.**

STEP 4: Suggest that everyone give something a try: **for one day, can they remember that every single person they interact with is, first and foremost, a human being?** Explain that they will be amazed at how it can make them feel, and how it can change the way they see and treat other people.

STEP 5: Ask all of the participants to please say hello to all the human beings around them! [Participants should now acknowledge each other. You say hello too!]

## 6. DIGNITY IN ACTION: OUR DIGNITY STORIES

### GOALS:

- Everyone shares positive dignity stories
- Help the group gain a deeper understanding of dignity through storytelling
- Give context to the concept of dignity by showing what it looks like in our everyday lives

STEP 1: It's easier to understand dignity when we see it in action. So let's share some of our own dignity stories.

STEP 2: **Tell your POSITIVE dignity story to the group** (you'll find examples at the end of this workshop guide). Please practice your dignity story in advance so that it is short and concise. This can be a story about something that happened to you, a time when you did something for someone else, or when you saw dignity in action. Perhaps it is a story about someone accepting you for who you are, or apologizing after making a false assumption about you.

STEP 3: Ask participants to move their chairs into **groups of 3-5 people**. If you are holding your workshop virtually, use the breakout room feature.

STEP 4: **Invite everyone to share a short, positive dignity story with their small group**. This is when you and any other volunteers in the room will listen in! As you walk around, take note of any particularly inspiring dignity stories. Our goal is to have 1 or 2 participants tell their story to the whole group. You may need to encourage them or directly select one person in each group to begin.

Please make sure everyone shares at least one story with their small group! The story can be very simple and short. For some, it's the first time their peers are listening to them. It is their own story and no one knows what they are going to say. This is empowering for most of them.

STEP 5: Give the group 2 minutes to wrap up their conversations; then ask them to move their chairs back and **rejoin the full group**.

### HELP! NO ONE WANTS TO SHARE THEIR STORY!

Sometimes participants tell stories right away and other times you need to help them get started. **Here are some tips:**

**Have simple dignity moments in mind** that you can share with participants struggling to think of a dignity story:

- Have you ever helped a sibling?
- Stood up for a friend who was being bullied?
- Helped an older person with their bags?
- Did anyone ever smile and say hello to you when you were new to a school/neighborhood/workplace?

Ask participants which story from their small groups stood out to them. Invite that person to share their story with the full group. You will often see shy participants shine during this time!

## (CONTINUED) DIGNITY IN ACTION: OUR DIGNITY STORIES

### STEPS:

STEP 6: Invite **two or more participants to share their dignity story** with everyone.

### TIPS:

- Remind the listeners that part of dignity is actively listening and supporting the speaker. It is brave to get up and speak so we need lots of clapping afterwards!
- After each story, please simply clap and thank the storyteller for participating. Ask the next storyteller to begin. Do not summarize the story. When adults do this, we inadvertently take away the story from the storyteller.

### WHY POSITIVE DIGNITY STORIES?

Unfortunately, all of us have felt or witnessed the pain of humiliation—the opposite of being treated with dignity. These painful experiences are often easier to recall than moments when we were treated like we matter. It goes back to what we covered earlier: When our dignity is hurt, our brains react in the same way as they do to a physical wound. That's how powerful dignity is.

We ask you to focus on *positive* dignity stories during most Dignity Workshops for several reasons:

- They empower workshop participants to see that their everyday actions really can make a positive impact
- They offer participants examples to model in their own lives
- We are simply volunteers. It is important to leave emotionally challenging situations to teachers or counselors who are trained to handle them.

## 7. WRAP-UP

STEP 1: As they prepare to leave, **remind everyone that every single one of us has a right to be treated with dignity. And, in turn, we all have a responsibility to treat everyone else with dignity.**

Each of us has a unique identity that should be celebrated. We also all share something very important: our humanity.

STEP 2: Keep practicing what we learned today:

- Don't fall into the trap of labeling people or making assumptions about them. Get to know them!
- **Every time you see someone, remember that they are first and foremost a human being.** Notice how it makes you feel and how it helps you to treat others with dignity!



**MY IDENTITY: WHAT MAKES  
ME, ME!**

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**ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT  
ME OR MY CULTURE**

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## EXAMPLES: DIGNITY STORIES

### EXAMPLE 1

When I was 15, my family and I moved to a new city. I started attending a new school in the middle of the school year. I didn't know anyone, I didn't know my way around the school, and I felt very lonely and intimidated.

Gym class was the worst. I dreaded every time teams were chosen. One by one, my classmates would be selected for teams. I was chosen last, or close to last, for weeks.

One day I saw one of my classmates, a young woman named Tania, whisper to her friend who was selecting team members. Suddenly, my name was called...I was selected for the team! Tania and I became friends from that very day. We never talked about it, but I know she asked her friend to choose me for the team.

That one simple action changed the way I felt about school. I felt accepted and like I mattered.

### EXAMPLE 2

I have an elderly neighbor named Anthony. Anthony's wife of many years passed away last year.

I don't know him well, but I wanted to do something to support him during this difficult time. I called several of my neighbors and asked if they would choose one day in the next month to bring dinner to Anthony. Each of them called another neighbor or two.

Pretty soon, we had a full schedule of dinners for Anthony. I will never forget the look on his face when I brought him his first meal and told him this was just the first of many visits he would receive.

It wasn't only Anthony whose spirits were lifted. All of us neighbors feel much more connected and supported as a community. And we continue to have dinners with Anthony!

### EXAMPLE 3

I went food shopping last week. There were two people ahead of me in the check-out line—a woman first and a man behind her.

When the cashier told the woman her total bill, she looked embarrassed and asked the cashier to remove several items from her order.

The man asked the cashier to please leave those items in the woman's order, but to add them to his bill.

I couldn't stop thinking about it all day: how the woman's face changed from embarrassed to a relieved smile. It motivated me to look for opportunities to step in and help where I can someone in need.