

Why is tolerance necessary for an ethical society and why does intolerance makes us inhuman?

Human dignity is at the core of humanity.

Intolerant

Tolerant

Inhuman Distortions

Human Flourishing

Exploring **concepts** like dignity, tolerance and intolerance is a complex, abstract and important journey. Exploring concepts helps you identify assumptions you may have accepted and helps you identify where the accepted assumptions may have originated. They may be reactions to certain situations and issues in society, or it may have religious or cultural links. Using your reason and reflective ability allows a fuller and deeper understanding of concepts and allows you to see the consequences and implications of your understanding.

The **concepts** of dignity, tolerance and intolerance are closely interrelated, and how you understand and use these concepts informs very different experiences in your life. This is because understanding '**concepts**' will help you understand the choices you make in your life. **Conceptual** understanding allows you to make informed decisions about the way you think, act and understand your place in the world. It attempts to give you some control over your thoughts and actions. Therefore, your thinking and consequently your actions hold the responsibility of creating the society and world you want to live in. This is an essential part of being human: having the choice to create a flourishing society begins in your brain.

A lot of mental activity occurs in your brain to understand language and concepts. To break down language is difficult but it's a worthwhile pursuit to understand the world around us and communicate effectively with others. We assume we understand each other easily, but that is not always the case. We have conflict because we have different understandings and this can begin as a small misunderstanding but it can erupt into a great misunderstanding and terrible conflict. This can be avoided if you are prepared to investigate the technical features of words and how they are used to communicate with others. Having an agreed understanding or intention can help to avoid confusion and miscommunication. This is one reason why we need to unpack the concepts behind the words we use in our everyday lives.

STEP 1: Concepts: Q & A.

Q: What is a concept?

A: Concepts are the mental tools we use to classify and order our experience in and of the world. Generally speaking, they are sometimes known as the 'vehicles of meaning.' We use concepts to categorise, classify and order thoughts to make judgements about that which we experience in the world, including other people. They are abstract signifiers that have been constructed by thinking beings to help us communicate effectively with each other.

Q: Are concepts multifaceted?

A: Concepts can be difficult to understand as they are mental tools and can sometimes be understood in different ways in different situations. Sometimes, that makes it tricky to agree to a standard meaning to any one concept.

Let us consider the concept of fish. You may have learnt in English class that the word 'fish' is a noun, therefore it denotes a thing we can see and touch. We know what a fish is and although there are many fish, we can

identify a fish easily. Generally speaking, most people agree on what a fish is, and what a fish is not. Therefore, a simple concept like 'fish' is easy to understand and communicate to others.

But, let us consider an important concept that is more abstract like 'tolerance.' Tolerance is an abstract noun, therefore it is not a thing, we cannot see or touch it; it is an abstract idea. Both 'fish' and 'freedom' are nouns but they are concepts constructed in our brain first. Our brain does all the work before we understand how to communicate our experiences and thoughts with other people. How well our brain unpacks language, determines how well we are able to communicate the meaning. To talk about fish begins with a common understanding of what is a fish. But, when we consider an abstract concept like, tolerance, we cannot assume that everyone has a common understanding of what tolerance means. Tolerance is not only an abstract concept; it is a multifaceted concept that needs to be unpacked and this makes it an important concept.

As part of a critical investigation, we first ask these three questions to identify if a concept is indeed an important concept.

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1) Is the concept used in our common day-to-day communication? | Yes/No |
| 2) Does the concept play an important role in our lives? | Yes/No |
| 3) Is the concept contestable? Can it's meaning be debated? | Yes/No |

If you have answered 'Yes' to all three questions, the concept is an important one and there is an opportunity to investigate the complexity of the concept. Let us test the concept of 'tolerance' against the above criteria questions. Tolerance is used in our common day to day conversations, and it plays an important role in our lives, and it can have different meanings to different people in different situations. Therefore, tolerance is an important concept and there is an opportunity to investigate its implications to our life's experiences and the way we use it to communicate to others. Remember, people are very complex and how we communicate with each other is very complex. We cannot assume everyone understands or experiences 'tolerance' in the same way.

However, the concept of fish is used in our common day to day conversations, and it may or may not play an important role in our lives, but the concept of fish is not debatable. We do not argue over the understanding of what the word fish means. Therefore, the concept of fish is not an important concept, but tolerance is an important concept.

Using the 3 criteria questions above, **test** the following concepts and circle which ones are important. Be careful and honest as you are not justifying the concept, you are **testing** them against the **criteria**.

Circle the important concepts:

CAT FAIRNESS FOOTBALL INTOLERANCE HORSE FISH PEN
 EQUALITY DIGNITY TEACHER RESPECT
 TOLERANCE

It is advisable to agree on the understanding of how you are using the concept of tolerance so there are no assumptions and the discussion begins in an open and honest way – on a level playing field so to speak. We need our communication to begin on an agreed foundation. Let us explore the different nuances of tolerance and what may happen if a society endorses intolerance.

Step 2: A journey into unpacking the concepts of dignity, tolerance & intolerance.

Let us begin our journey into understanding the importance of investigating the concept of tolerance by considering the words of Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO from his address at the dedication of the Museum of Tolerance on 8th February in 1993.

“...it is crucial for all of us to give new meaning to the word ‘tolerance’ and understand that our ability to value each and every person is the ethical basis for peace, security and intercultural dialogue.

A peaceful future depends on our everyday acts and gestures. Let us educate for tolerance in our schools and communities, in our homes and workplaces and, most of all, in our hearts and minds.”

The back story that occurs in your brain.

- Have you ever thought about how you make decisions about what you think is right or wrong?
- How you ever considered that all your thoughts cannot be categorised into right and wrong or good and bad?
- Have you ever thought that you actually make a decision every time you speak and act?
- Have you considered about how your actions affirm your decisions?
- Have you thought about why you are responsible for your actions and therefore must accept the consequences of your actions?

These are all big and interesting questions about what happens in your brain and how you choose your actions in everyday life. It would take some time to unpack what each question is asking of us and although that is a good thing to do, we have limited time and space. So, let’s take a step back and focus on one little idea. Let’s think about mental concepts.

Why is tolerance necessary for an ethical society and why does intolerance make us inhuman?

You are about to investigate the concepts of dignity, tolerance and intolerance.

Human **dignity** is at the core of humanity

Intolerant

Tolerant

Inhuman Distortions

Human Flourishing

1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th December 1948 as a direct result of the experiences of the Second World War.

After the Preamble, the first Article states:

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood [sic].

In your own words, explain the meaning of Article 1.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2: Angela Merkel stated: ‘When it comes to human dignity, we cannot make compromises.’

What do you think Angela Merkel meant by this assertion?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3: Do you think that the first Article of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and Angela Merkel’s statement are saying the exact same thing about human dignity? Can you identify any similarities and/or differences in the two statements?

UN Article 1. ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’	Angela Merkel: ‘When it comes to human dignity, we cannot make compromises.’
Similarities	(Empty space for student response)

Differences	
-------------	--

4: Write out your understanding of human dignity:
.....
.....

STEP 3: PREPARING FOR AN ETHICAL JOURNEY: *personal thoughts at this point in time.*

During time in the classroom, individually and/or with a partner complete the following sentences to the 8 pre-learning questions below including relevant examples that support your definitions.

1: The definition of genocide is An example of genocide is

2: The definition of an ethical democracy is An example of an ethical democracy is An example of democracy that does not work well is

3: I understand the concept of 'fairness' as An example of fairness between my friends and/or family is An example of fairness in the classroom is An example of unfairness on a national level is

4: I understand the concept of 'equality' as An example of equality at my school is
--

An example of equality at a national level is

An example of inequality at a national level is

5: I understand the concept of 'respect' as

An example of respect in my classroom is

An example of respect at a national level is

An example of disrespect at a national level is

6: I understand the concept of 'tolerance' as

An example of tolerance in my classroom is

An example of tolerance at my school is

An example of intolerance at my school is

An example of tolerance at a national level is

An example of intolerance at a national level is

I consider the following concepts as good values in society: (please circle) **fairness equality respect tolerance**

7: With a partner, **prioritise** 'fairness, equality, respect, tolerance' from 1 being the most important in a democratic society to 4 being the least important in a democratic society. You both must agree and complete the reflection individually.

1:

2:

3:

4:

Individual reflection. Explain the **process** of the **prioritising** exercise above including **how you decided** on the order from 1 to 4. Include the criteria or questions you used as part of the process.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

8: I consider myself a tolerant person because

Give an example of you being tolerant.....

I think that society should/shouldn't be tolerant of others in society because

Share your responses with your partner but do not change any responses.

Some societies believe that people should be tolerant and other societies believe that people do not need to be tolerant. In our multi-cultural world, the emphasis on what 'tolerance' means has become a contemporary debate.

We are focusing understanding the concepts of 'dignity,' 'tolerance' and/or 'intolerance.' Before visiting the Jewish Holocaust Centre write out three questions that you think will help you explore these concepts. Think very carefully as you form your questions.

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Mapping tolerance on a spectrum. Imagine a line that showed two extreme positions: at one end of the line is intolerance and at the other end is tolerance (see below). Identify (mark the line) where you see yourself in relation to being a tolerant or intolerant person in your everyday activities. If you find this difficult think of an ethical situation where you did not agree with something or someone. What was your response to it? Were you tolerant or intolerant at that time?

Identify a situation and write here:

Human dignity is at the core of humanity.

Intolerant

Tolerant



STEP 4: PACKING YOUR SUITCASE FOR THE JOURNEY: MENTAL TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE & INTOLERANCE:

Here is a glossary of terms in relation to tolerance from a range of sources through-out history and some contemporary views. It is by no means exhaustive but it will help you to have some mental tools for this thinking journey. Examples are provided and at times posed as questions to support your understanding. Read carefully in pairs and discuss ideas. There is a section below each term for you to add some notes or questions.

Philosophy in relation to this journey into concepts.	This project is designed to give you some mental tools to consider the concepts of dignity/tolerance/intolerance. For example: Does tolerance mean the same thing to all people? Is tolerance necessary for an ethical society?
Notes:	
Identifying assumptions	What is not being said but most people assume that others agree to the hidden meaning although they seldom do and this is one the causes of miscommunication and misunderstanding. For example, a question that has been developed around tolerance or intolerance, we might assume that tolerance means the same thing to all people.
Notes:	
Good philosophical/thinking question A question that allows students to explore what is being asked and helps students to identify what is not being said about something important. For example: Why is tolerance necessary for an ethical society and why does intolerance makes us inhuman?	
Notes:	
Tolerance used as a generally agreed concept. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the depth of this definition carefully in relation to different levels of tolerance, such as personal tolerance, private tolerance, societal tolerance, national tolerance, or maybe global tolerance. 	The concept of toleration has three aspects embedded in its definition: 1: Acceptance that your own position is right (therefore you hold your own position as right but you are aware there are other positions) 2: Objection against others' views that might be accepted by you (therefore you understand that others have views that are not your own but your own position remains dominant)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there degrees of tolerance or levels of tolerance? • Consider if you think that ‘tolerance’ should be reciprocal between two groups? 	<p>3: Rejection that the other position is not accepted (therefore you hold your own position as the dominant or superior view and tolerate others views but reject accepting them as your own) For example: Think about the complexities of a multi-cultural society and how cultural norms can sometimes clash between different cultural perspectives and practices.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	
<p>Tolerance: other concepts that get confused with tolerance but have nuanced differences. A good exercise is to work out the defining differences between these concepts and tolerance.</p>	<p>Acceptance, appeasement, rights, indifference, affirmation, suffering, enduring. Can you think of any others?</p>
<p>Notes: Identify the nuanced difference between acceptance and tolerance. Which value do you think is more important in society? (Consider if you can accept everyone else’s views or if it’s better to be tolerant?)</p>	
<p>Tolerance in reference to free speech attributed to the 18thC French philosopher, Voltaire. ‘I disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it.’ For example: Freedom of speech in the United States of America.</p>	
<p>Notes: Think of an example where free speech is not a good thing for society. Write it here.</p>	
<p>Tolerance in reference to the 20thC political philosopher John Rawls’ definition in regards to supporting a society that values freedom.</p>	<p>‘A society that values freedom should try to tolerate the intolerant, but if the intolerant start to endanger the free society itself, then we do not have to tolerate them.’ For example: consider extremist views promoted on social media.</p>
<p>Notes: In your own words explain what Rawls means. Write it here.</p>	
<p>Intolerance in regards to free speech in general terms.</p>	<p>Speech that incites violence against other people. For example: Klu Klux Klan.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	
<p>Paradox of tolerance according to the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper in</p>	<p>Popper suggests that if we tolerate even the intolerant, ‘... then the tolerant will be destroyed and tolerance with them.’ As paradoxical as it may seem, defending tolerance ‘...requires to not tolerate the intolerant.’</p>

his book <i>The Open Society and Its Enemies</i> published in 1945. (Note: there are many ideas about the 'paradox of tolerance.)	Popper is highlighting what may happen when tolerance is taken to the extreme and intolerance is tolerated. Perhaps our understanding of tolerance needs to include moderation. For example: Consider hate speech or terrorist ideology.
Notes: Do you think Popper and Rawls are talking about the same understanding of the extreme of tolerance? Try to work out the difference.	
Optional challenge if you want to challenge yourself to a deeper and more abstract understanding of tolerance. There are many academic views about tolerance. Here are 4 different conceptual interpretations of tolerance according to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.	
*Permission conception: hierarchical structure where the authority is the majority's view qualified by permission of the minority groups to live according to their beliefs but accepting the dominant authority of the dominant group. This may be considered a reciprocal understanding between the two groups. For example: Democratic society where the majority rules but the minority are considered.	
*Co-existence conception: between roughly equal power, who for the sake of peace and pursuit of own interests, have a horizontal relationship on reciprocal compromise. It can be an uneasy relationship if either group gains more power making the power unbalanced. For example: Think about the relationship of a coalition government where two parties must work together even though they may have different ideologies.	
*Respect conception: reciprocal respect guided by agreed norms from all parties.	
*Esteem conception: respecting others as moral and political equals and having some kind of ethical esteem for each other's beliefs. Each party holds 'reserved esteem' for the other but believe their own group is holding the more positive position therefore they tolerate each other.	
*Note to the 4 conceptions of tolerance have positive and negative traits. See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/toleratation/ for a deeper understanding.	

Before we journey deeply into the concept of 'tolerance' and by extension 'intolerance', remember that it is best to prepare as well as we can. We need to think carefully and deeply about these concepts as you develop a clearer understanding. However, it is also useful to reflect on historical hindsight to understand how we might agree with our current views or change our views or want to explore something deeper. We might support the claim that a democratic society is an ethical society because people are able to be themselves and have one's own values. But what happens when one group's values conflict with other group's values in a free society. We ask, 'Why is tolerance necessary for an ethical society and why does intolerance makes us inhuman? This can be very confronting, especially during your visit to the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

STEP 5: The journey into the Jewish Holocaust Centre: notes.

- Complete the first sections of this booklet to develop some mental tools about tolerance/intolerance.
- Identify three features of the exhibition that jolt your mind to think about dignity/tolerance/intolerance in different ways.

- Draw or make a few quick notes so that you will be able to refer to them when you return to the classroom.
- Consider the ethical implications when tolerance is absent in a society. What are the ethical implications of intolerance?
- You might add a sketch, quote, or note a feeling you have in response to the exhibition, or maybe a feeling in response to a survivor's story, it may be an object, model or poem. There are no limitations to this section.

Note 1:

Note 2:

Note 3:

STEP 6: Arriving back in the classroom after the excursion: time to reflect

We began this journey with the prompt: Why is tolerance necessary for an ethical society and why does intolerance makes us inhuman?

You may think this is the right question to ask about ‘tolerance’ or ‘intolerance’. But, you may think you are able to form a better question.

I think the right questions to ask is:

.....

Discuss your ideas and feelings with your partner.

Make some notes or write some questions below about anything that continues to trouble/confuse you or requires further exploration.

Reflections on my understanding of dignity/tolerance/intolerance.

After experiencing the journey of the Jewish Holocaust Centre and learning about the complexities of the abstract and important concepts of dignity/tolerance/intolerance map where you see yourself on the continuum below. Has your position moved since your last identification in this booklet?

Human dignity is at the core of humanity.

Intolerant

Tolerant



Reflection: Try to explain why you think you have changed your position on the continuum.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Step 7: COMPLETING THE JOURNEY:

Using your new mental tools and your notes from your visit to the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Have a go at responding to the prompt below or the question you developed yourself.

1: Why is tolerance necessary for an ethical society and why does intolerance makes us inhuman?

OR

2: Your question:

PLANNING:
