



Interfaith Philadelphia

GUIDE FOR VISITING RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS / TIPS

- Be as open as possible to every experience
- Anticipate that your comfort zone may – and likely will – be stretched (that's a good thing!); keep in mind that moments of discomfort can be opportunities to learn
- Do your best to balance self-care with risk-taking (ex. when feeling uncomfortable, simply sit quietly and observe; ex. when discovering something new, experiment with trying it yourself as permissible within that tradition)
- Remember that diversity exists within every religious tradition; one community does not and cannot speak for and/or reflect the practices of the entire faith tradition
- Don't be afraid to ask questions!
- Be honest about what you are experiencing/feeling, and use your best judgment about when, how and with whom to process

PRE-VISIT / PREPARATION

- Consider what assumptions (negative or positive) you may have regarding a particular tradition which may be emotionally charged for you (note: you may not even be aware of any until you get there)
- Identify general questions you have about the tradition
- Select clothing appropriate for the visit (ex. remember head covering if required)

VISIT / TIPS FOR ENGAGING

- Turn off cell phones (or leave them behind)
- Respect community practices/norms, even if you don't understand or agree (ex. some communities may require head coverings or may not permit photography during the session)

- Be intentional in deciding whether you will participate or not; pay attention to and trust your instincts – what feels “right”; avoid judgment of yourself or others in your group (you should feel free to step out if you’re really uncomfortable)
- Boredom is OK, but you are encouraged to remain as present as possible to the experience regardless
- Pay attention to what you see/notice/feel, whether for articulating questions, processing with group leaders and members later and/or for journaling; take notes if helpful and appropriate (note: some communities may not permit writing during worship)
- Again, don’t be afraid to ask questions (keeping in mind difference between curious and judgmental questions) – there should be plenty of opportunity during the visit
- If you tend to speak/ask questions easily, be mindful of how much you are speaking/asking and allow space for others to participate; if you tend to wait to speak/ask questions, take a risk!
- If you have special requirements during the time of the visit (ex. prayer time/space needed, dietary restrictions, etc.) please make this known to the trip leader

POST-VISIT / EVALUATION

- If helpful, discuss any oops / ouch / wow moments with others in the group following the visit (jot down thoughts while still fresh in your mind)
- There may be a structured time of reflection/evaluation after the visit; as mentioned above, please be honest and as specific as possible about your experience, for better and for worse