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(Warm up Activity)

CLASS/ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

INTRODUCTION

We each bring different ideas, feelings, and perspectives to every situation. We act on our perceptions and on our experiences from the past. Our backgrounds are all different – and all important, yet it is rare that we sit down and hear these experiences from each other. As a result, we don't often know where people are really coming from.

This is a way to understand each other better.

INSTRUCTIONS

You will have 3 minutes to talk about your class and ethnic background.

Focus on (refer to newsprint):

1. One thing that was hard for you growing up in the class, ethnic background you come from.
2. One source of strength for you in the class, ethnic background you come from.

The person next to you will be an ACTIVE LISTENER. That means he/she will listen attentively with little comment – except to help you stay focused on the two questions. (i.e., listeners do not carry on a discussion – they listen).

Everyone will have a chance to both talk and listen 3 minutes each. Active listener's job will be to keep people on task – focused on the questions.

Model the Activity for 3 minutes in front of the group. Listener should watch time and stop talker at 3 minutes. Then split into two groups of 10-12 each.

Process (whole group together)

1. Notice any themes?
2. Similarities between ethnic groups?

Summarize: show the threads of similarity and the real strengths we bring from different backgrounds. Struggles we have all had – differences are good and provide us with rich group resources.

We all have significant ethnic backgrounds, "United Stateser" means all of these.

Refer back to oppression model: We must appreciate the differences, not just tolerate them.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

WHEN YOU ARE THE LISTENER

Listen with delight – anything your partner says is O.K.

Try to understand, but ask questions only for clarification. The purpose is to help partner clarify his/her thinking, and not to communicate with you.*

Make sure your partner looks at you when she/he is speaking.

Be sure to look at him/her all the time.

WHEN IT IS YOUR TURN

Use all the time allocated whether you think you need it or not; but don't run overtime.

Say whatever you want about the topic. It's your experience, and you are important. You deserve to be listened to.

Maintain eye contact.

If you feel awkward, or don't know what to say next, just laugh about it.

NOTE: *Paradoxically, these sessions will subsequently improve communication.

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RULES FOR BRAINSTORMING

1. Express no negative evaluation of any idea presented.
2. Work for quantity, not quality – the longer the list of ideas the better.
3. Expand on each other's ideas; elaborate wherever possible.
4. Encourage far out ideas.
5. Record each idea, at least by a key word or phrase.
6. Set a time limit and hold to it strictly.