

TOOLBOX FOR INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS: ICEBREAKERS AND ACTIVITIES

Crystal Clear Communications

Give each member of the group an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper, the facilitator needs one too. Have them close their eyes. The facilitator issues the instructions and follows them as well. No questions are allowed. Instructions: Fold the paper in half. Rip off a corner. Fold the paper in half. Rip off a corner. Fold the paper in half. Rip off a corner. The group can now open their eyes and find that there are many different shapes of paper. The debrief covers the need for two-way communication and that the different perceptions of the people caused the many different designs. If time permits the group can be put in pairs. Have the pairs sit back to back and repeat the exercise using two way communications and find that the patterns come out closer.

Observation

Arrange all the participants into a circle facing inward (or do it in pairs). Have them look over the other participants to see how they look now. Next have them turn outward and change 3 things about themselves. They will have fun with this and you will see some pretty cool changes!! Have them turn inwards and ask if anyone notices the change. Debrief and discuss the importance of observation in working interculturally.

Do As I Say

Ask everyone to pay attention and to do what you TELL then to do. Then make a "victory" sign with 2 fingers and SAY "Place your right hand on your chin." and at the same time PUT your fingers against your cheek. As soon as people respond, tell them to freeze and note where their hand is.

In my experience, more people will respond to the visual cue and put their hand against their cheek. Those who follow the verbal instructions will be allowed to gloat briefly. You can then briefly discuss verbal dominance versus visual dominance, as well as the importance of non-verbal communication.

What's Important?

Quiz: What Do You Remember? You don't actually have to take the quiz. Just read this straight through the following questions:

1. Name the 5 wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last 5 winners of the Miss America contest.
3. Name 10 people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer prize.
4. Name the last 5 Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
5. Name the last 5 World Series winners.

How did you do? The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners. Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Name half a dozen heroes whose stories have inspired you.

Easier? The lesson: The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones that care.