

Facilitation instructions

Create-a-Culture (Grades 5+)

This activity provides a non-threatening opportunity to experience the feelings of being involved with people who are different. It develops anti-racist, cross-cultural education skills to foster positive relationships across differences.

“We are going to do an activity to experience the feelings of being involved with people who are different. The goal is to “create a culture” in 5 minutes, with three characteristics of communication and ways of interacting for your group. Non-verbal as well as verbal can be used. They may be a random collection or cohesive to a theme. Everyone in the group has to agree on the characteristics you choose. Practice them as a group.

Some examples for characteristics: language, the way you speak, your volume of speech, gestures, your body boundaries, your directness, your eye contact rules, your emotions, whether you touch people when speaking, asking questions, repeating yourself, the way you laugh or your public persona - serious, light-hearted, what you value, how you show respect, etc.”

The group is divided into groups (2 or more). The groups may have a colour, number, letter, etc. They may be divided in advance or numbered off. Facilitator indicates where each group will work.

“You will choose your characteristics and practice. You have about 5 minutes.”

Facilitator circulates to help, answer questions and check if they are ready.

“Act your culture’ while trying to interact and communicate with people from the other cultures.”

Debriefing:

- Ask people to describe other groups, one group at a time. So people who were not in “orange” describe orange culture. Then another group, until all have been described by people from outside the group. If someone from the group wants to share, ask them to wait - they will have a turn.
- Note if they use words like strange, rude, weird, bad, scary, obnoxious... This shows how quickly we jump to judgement and “us and them” thinking and create stereotypes.
- Ask each group to describe their culture.
- Raise your hand if you tried to talk to someone and it didn’t work.
- What made interaction and communication difficult or challenging or confusing in this game? (Not knowing the rules, language barriers, characteristics that seem to be in conflict, judgement...)
- What is real in your experience?

- Raise your hand if you were able to interact and communicate with people or a person from other cultures.
- What made it work?
- What is helpful in real cross-cultural communication so we understanding each other? (observe first, then imitate, ask questions for curiosity and with respect, research, slow down if language is an issue - don't talk louder, find another way to phrase something, smile, learn a greeting in the other person's language, follow rules or protocols once you know them, listen!)
- How might you use this experience in other situations?

Sticky Labels

Sticky Labels addresses stereotypes and the way they create boxes. Debriefing fosters discussion on the harm they cause and what we can do. See attachments for sticky labels elementary labels for grades 5-8; high school labels for grades 9- adult.

You will need sticky address labels, or masking tape. Felt markers. Prepare beforehand by developing a list of POSITIVE labels (adjectives) and a list of NEGATIVE labels (adjectives) - which describe people. Print or write one adjective on every label. See attached for electronic labels.

Everyone is in a large circle - (eyes closed is optional) Facilitators (and helpers if available) randomly place negative labels on the left shoulder (front) of each participant. Instruct participants to look at their label, ask if they understand the meaning of their label.

Facilitators tell participants that they are to try to trade their label for one that is more meaningful to them (describes them more truthfully). If they are happy with their label, they do not have to trade it, but they should go around viewing other people's labels.

After 3-5 minutes of trading, ask participants to go back to the circle. This time the positive labels are placed randomly on each participants' right shoulder. Participants can look at their label, ask if they understand the meaning.

On signal, they begin trading again. After 3-5 minutes participants are asked to return to the circle for debriefing.

Debriefing:

1. Who was able to trade both labels? Why?
2. Who was able to trade only one label? Neither? Why?
3. How do "Sticky Labels" relate to stereotyping?
4. What can/should be done to eliminate "sticky labels" from begin used in hurtful ways?

Finish this activity by placing a garbage can in the middle of the circle. Ask everyone to put both their sticky labels in the garbage. Note that you know some may feel attached to their labels, but that is never all of who you are. As they place them in the garbage, they can think about a real label that has been stuck to them and let it go. They can even say it out loud, if they want.