

Prejudice: An Awareness-Expansion Activity

GOAL: To explore feelings and ideas about prejudice, to explore validity of common prejudices, and to provide the opportunity to experience being the target of prejudice in a non-threatening manner.

TIME REQUIRED: 60 minutes.

MATERIALS: Sets of cards prepared ahead of time with names of specific groups (e.g. African-American, Jew, Asian-American, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, American Indian, White person, Arab, Ku Klux Klan member, Muslim, etc.). Prepare enough sets of cards so that there will be one set for each group of four in the workshop (e.g., if 24 are expected to attend, 6 sets of cards will be needed).

Overhead transparency of process questions.

PHYSICAL SETTING: Space enough to break into smaller groups for discussion.

PROCESS: Instruct participants to form smaller groups of four. Provide one person in each group with a set of the prepared cards. Request that the person leave the signs face down. Inform participants that each card identifies a specific racial, cultural, or ethnic group. The person holding the cards can now look at the top card without showing it to other group members. Instruct that person to be sure that it does NOT apply to him/her. If it does apply, instruct the participant to put that card on the bottom of the stack and choose another until a non-applicable card is turned over. After the first person has selected a card that does not apply to him/her, request that he/she pass the stack to the next person. Continue this process until all group members have a card.

The first member of each group should now display the card so that the small group can see the identifying word. During the next three minutes, the remaining group members are to take turns expressing stereotypical remarks about the category of persons named by that sign. The remarks do not necessarily need to be reflective of opinions held by the group members but may reflect things they may have heard or seen growing up in your family, at school, at work, or in the media. The person with the sign is to counter each statement and defend the group the sign represents. Inform the group when three minutes is up and request that they repeat this process with each of the small group members.

PROCESS QUESTIONS: Place process questions on overhead and request that the small groups discuss them: How did you feel when you were seated alone defending against others' comments? How did you feel when you were making stereotypical remarks? What did you learn about the effects of expressing prejudicial opinions?

Summarize activity with large group: Stereotypes have consequences - there is no such thing as no harm, no foul in stereotyping; Stereotyping creates separation among and across people; More truth about our attitudes is said in jest than we care to admit and believe; Our feelings about being stereotyped are just below the surface -- it does not take much scratching to touch raw nerves.

SOURCE: *Leader's Manual for Valuing Ethnic Diversity: A Cultural Awareness Workshop.* Designed and written by the staff of the Counseling and Mental Health Center, The University of Texas at Austin, 303 West Mall Building, Austin, TX 78731-8119, 512/471-3515.