

Remembering Prejudice Guided Imagery

GOAL: To help participants get in touch with their own racial attitudes and behaviors; explore reasons why participants choose to guard and/or act on their racial attitudes and behaviors (e.g. through colluding, etc.); to encourage participants to accept personal responsibility for perpetuating their racial attitudes and behavior.

TIME REQUIRED: 60 minutes.

MATERIALS: Process questions on overhead transparencies.

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

PROCESS: Instruct participants to arrange themselves into groups of three. Use the following guided imagery instructions: Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Allow yourself to begin relaxing. Take another deep breath, hold it for about 4 seconds, and let it out slowly. Do this once more. Now, close your eyes and think back to the most memorable time you can remember feeling discriminated against or left out of a group because you were different. For example, if your most memorable time occurred when you were a child, you might have felt like the other kids didn't want to play with you or be your friend because you were different from them. Maybe you were picked last or not chosen at all. Maybe you were different in some physical way - or different because of your age, sex, religion, race or social class. As you think about that time, try to remember how you felt while it was happening, where you were, who was present, how old you were, what time of year it was, and any other important details that help you remember it. As you remember this situation, remember the circumstances surrounding the discrimination. (pause 30 seconds) What were the feelings you experienced as a result of being discriminated against? (pause 30 seconds) What attitudes/beliefs/conclusions did you formulate about the person or people who discriminated against you? (pause 30 seconds) Did you draw some conclusions about yourself based on this experience? (pause 30 seconds)

Give participants 60 seconds or so to come out of the imagery and request that they discuss, in small groups, their thoughts and experiences during the imagery. Place the three process questions (i.e. What were the feelings you experienced. . ., etc.) on an overhead projector and allow small groups 10 minutes to discuss. A few participants may wish to share with the larger group.

Facilitate the second guided imagery with the following instructions: Close your eyes, and think back to the most memorable time you can recall discriminating against someone else on the basis of their race, social class, gender, religion, and so on. Perhaps you left them out of a group or overlooked them. Or maybe you did not want to associate with them because they were so different from yourself. As you think about it, try to remember how you felt while it was happening, where you were, who was with you, what time of year it was, and any other details that help you remember it. What were the circumstances surrounding the discriminatory event? (pause 30 seconds) Did you feel any type of pressure (e.g. parental, peer, cultural) to continue discriminating against this individual? (pause 30 seconds) Is there anything you could have done differently in that situation? (pause 30 seconds)

Give participants 60 seconds or so to come out of the imagery and request that they discuss, in small groups, their thoughts and experiences during the imagery. Place the two process questions (i.e. Did you feel any type of pressure. . ., etc.) on an overhead projector and allow small groups 10 minutes to discuss. A few participants may wish to share with the larger group.

Summarize purpose of exercise. Some may have felt hurt, guilty, shameful, angry, etc. Acknowledge that awareness of these responses can help to reduce discriminatory behaviors.

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.