



Know Yourself, Understand Others, Improve Your Relationships

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Purpose

The goals of this facilitated lesson/activity are to:

- Clearly define patterns of traditions and cultures;
- Identify personal biases that may impede communication processes; and
- Introduce ways to improve comfort levels in building relationships.

Presenting the Information

Before leading a discussion or presenting any of the information, ensure and provide an environment that is safe for any discussion and ideas, free from complication, open-minded, and respectful of each person's journey along the scale of building relationships. Keep the discussion real, have fun, and keep evolving (Garcia, Curtis, and Hubert, 2014).

The leader should understand the concepts presented relating to cultural patterns, social interactions, clear communications, and personal bias. Understand that there is no "right or wrong" in human difference. Rather, look for understanding of what makes distinctions and why there is difference. Then look for similarities as a foundation on which to build a relationship and/or to begin a dialogue with those that come from different backgrounds.

Facilitating the Learning Process

In any workshop where one is presenting new or challenging ideas, it may be wise to share personal motivation at the beginning of a presentation/workshop. For example, when facilitating, it may be helpful to the audience if the leader offered something like, "This will be a learning experience for all of us. I am not an expert in this process." (WSU Extension, 2002). Of course, the leaders will have to decide the best ways to establish safe learning environments, but remember:

- Review agenda so that participants know what to expect.
- Assure a sense of control for participants.
- Give participants credit for their experiences and knowledge.
- Use personal stories to illustrate examples (leader and participants).
- Listen to what's being said by participants.
- Focus on the learner.
- Allow extra time for to accommodate those for whom

English is a second language.

Since this is a process of reflection and discussing discussion of feelings and beliefs, it is best to lay some ground rules. For example:

- This is a non-threatening learning environment.
- Every comment and offered ideas will be respected by each participant.
- This a time of learning and reflection.
- Feel free to share your thoughts and ideas without hesitation.
- There are no "stupid" questions.



Cultural Patterns

Review the section in the "lesson" (MF3215) to assure your own understanding of the concepts of *Cultural Patterns, Culture, and Barriers to Communication*.

Understanding cultural patterns teaches us why humans have cultural biases. Understanding cultural patterns lays a foundation for learning that another culture is not wrong, somehow lesser, or better if it is divergent from your own background or experience. Let's explore difference and similarity across cultures. See if you can identify your own cultural pattern. Each of the cultural patterns is divided, basically, into five categories: human nature, humans and nature, time orientation, activity orientation, and social orientation (Adapted from Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Understanding Personal Biases

Interesting materials have been written on personal attitudes toward difference by Myrna Marofsky. The

idea of teaching anything that has to do with human interactions must include the understanding of personal biases. Marofsky developed the “Tolerance Scale,” in which humans come to understand their own attitudes toward difference.

Appreciation: You value the difference of others and believe that difference enhances your own life.

Acceptance: Difference does not really matter to you. You tend to look for commonalities and try to ignore difference.

Tolerance: You don’t feel completely comfortable with difference. You will treat those you view as different with respect, but you would rather not have them as associates

Avoidance: Difference clearly makes you uncomfortable. You try to avoid and do not want to work with those who are different.

Repulsion: Difference is not seen as “normal.” Working or coming in contact with those who are different causes you a lot of discomfort.

These points are not to describe a “right” or “wrong” in being. Rather it is to promote the notion that all humans have biases. In order to move others, as facilitators, toward understanding barriers to building relationships, it is best to recognize personal reasons for obstacles to trusting others and experiencing satisfying interactions.

Fostering Relationships with Those in Other Cultures

Often, when one speaks of diversity, there are connotations of race, ethnicity, and people of other cultural backgrounds. That is not always true. The definition of diverse is simply: variety, different, varied, mixed, and distinct. Notice your own family, with whom you have had a life-long relationship. You will find many things that make you different from one another. You will see physical, intellectual, beliefs, and many other differences. But do you dwell on those differences? It’s likely that you do not, because you have a vested interest in one another. Is it possible to develop similar relationships with other people? That is not definite, but better knowledge of one another leads to greater unity in human groups (Shapiro interview, 2001).

Activity – Group Builder/Mixer – What’s in Your Name?

By Deryl Waldren, 4-H Youth Development Specialist*

This group-builder highlights our uniqueness by helping participants celebrate the name origins of one another. It offers an excellent way to begin a workshop, because it helps each participant introduce him/herself with a personal story, which puts most people at ease for building dialogue. Participants will often remember the details about another person’s name long after the training or meeting is over.

1. Pick any part of your name (first, middle, last, maiden, etc.).
2. Write it on flip chart, white board, or someplace conspicuous in front of the group with a marker of the color of your choice.
3. What’s the significance of that name? Why were you named that? What’s the story behind your name, etc.?
4. Share your commentary with the group. Larger groups may want to have a time limit.
5. Each person will complete sharing his/her name in a random order.

The facilitator or any observers would likely participate in this game, too. It sets the stage for discussion and promotes familiarity, which will aid in further discussion with workshop materials.

* Adapted from “Name Origin” from Leadership RAP

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