

Concentric Circle Activity

Rationale: The purpose of this activity is to provide a structure for participants to discuss issues concerning identity, personal bias, prejudice and discrimination. Responses are brief and partners keep changing, so at the end of the activity, each participant will have made a personal connection with a number of people.

Requirements:

Materials: list of concentric circle questions (*for the facilitator only*)

Time: 30-60 minutes, depending on the number of questions asked and the length of time scheduled for processing the activity.

Space: open area with enough room for participants to form two concentric circles, an inner circle facing out and an outer circle facing inward

Number of participants: 50 maximum

Age level: high school to adult

Directions:

- Instruct participants to count off in order, one, two, one, two, etc. Participants who are number ones will form an outside circle facing toward the center of the room, while the number twos will form an inside circle facing out. If there is an even number, each person should be facing another person from the opposite circle. If the number is uneven, a facilitator can fill in to make another pair or a triad can be formed.
- Tell participants the purpose of the activity. Let them know that you will be asking a certain number of questions (you decide the number) after which each **pair will have 2 minutes to respond** to the question. Tell participants that you will signal when one minute is up by calling "Change!" (meaning change roles, not partners) at which time the talking partner becomes the listener.
Instruct participants to practice **good listening skills, and not to interrupt the Person** who is speaking.
Each person will have one minute to respond to each question and one minute to listen to a partner's response to the same question.
- At the end of each question instruct the outer circle to move one person to the left. The inner circle does not move. In this way, the new pairs are formed for responding to each question.
- Ask some combination of the following questions. More than ten questions tends to make the activity too long.

- Share with your partner one prejudice you learned while you were growing up.
- Share one thing about your first, middle or last name.
- what is one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you?
- what is your favorite holiday and why?
- Describe a time when you were discouraged from doing something because of your gender.
- Describe a time when you were discouraged from doing something because of your age.
- Describe your elementary school. who was your favorite teacher? Why?
- Share with your partner one stereotype which disturbs you about your racial, religious or ethnic group.
- Tell your partner about an ethnic or cultural group, other than your own, that you admire, respect or enjoy.
- Share with your partner your earliest memory of contact with or awareness of people from a different racial group.
- If you could change one thing about society, what would it be?
- Describe a time when someone's words hurt you.
- Share with your partner a time when you did not interrupt prejudice.
- Tell your partner what your racial, religious or ethnic background is, and something about that background of which you are proud.
- What is a stereotype/image about a racial, religious or ethnic group other than your own that you sometimes find yourself responding to even though you don't want to, or don't really believe it.
- Describe a time when you witnessed an act of prejudice or someone being discriminated against. How did you respond?
- Describe at least one quality you have as an educator that you feel good about and that will help you address diversity issues in the classroom.
- How do you feel when you hear someone speaking a language other than your native tongue?
- What is your biggest concern about dealing with issues of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in your classroom?
- Tell your partner the first time you experienced yourself as being a member of a racial or ethnic group.

- Use discussion questions to focus the processing of the activity.
Bring the group back together

Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to share this personal information about yourself with your different partners?

Without naming the person, what did someone do that made you feel you were being listened to well?

Was anything you heard surprising or new to you?

Some questions may have been more difficult to answer than others. Which questions were particularly hard for you to respond to? Why do you think that was so? Which questions did you particularly enjoy answering?

What, if anything, did you learn from this activity?