**Exploring Leadership Series, Social Awareness: Accepting Differences & Appreciating Diversity**

Diversity comes in many forms: gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, culture, socioeconomic background, etc. All of these contribute to an individual’s unique experience of the world. This activity will allow participants to examine the presence of Diversity in their own experience and practice Appreciating Differences.

**CONVERSATION STARTER:**
- How are you different? Has your difference ever caused a problem?

Embracing Diversity and Accepting Differences not only makes you a global citizen, but it improves your productivity, perspective, and life experience. The question is “How do we do it?” This activity with cards will help you see how acceptance works when we belong to particular groups.

**WHAT YOU’LL NEED:**
- Index cards
- A variety of stickers: cartoon characters, inspirational sayings, colored dots, etc.; the idea is to use stickers that can be grouped by similarities, but there is no single “correct” grouping.

**FACILITATION TIPS:**
- Prior to the event, place stickers on the 3x5 index cards. Some cards might have multiple stickers, but of the same design. The point is to have several possible ways the cards could be grouped (kind of sticker, number of stickers, color/shape of stickers, etc.).
- Have one or two cards with stickers that do not easily fit into any group.

**KEY OBJECTIVES:**
- Understand the importance of belonging and inclusion.
- Identify ways to make others feel they belong.

**EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:**
- Gather the entire group in a circle. Give each participant a card (face down) that they are not to look at. (Make sure the exclusive card(s) go to participants who can handle being “different.”) During this activity, DO NOT LOOK AT YOUR OWN CARD and DO NOT TALK. This instruction will need to be repeated frequently.

  - Bring your card to your forehead so that you can’t see what’s on it but everyone else can.
  - In silence and without knowing where you belong, try to get into groups based on the cards you see on other people’s foreheads.
  - There will be initial confusion as to what ‘groups’ you are looking for, but eventually people will start milling about and helping each other (with gestures and strong personalities) get into groups based on similarities of the stickers.
  - Observe the dynamics of how the groups are formed.
  - When the groups have been formed, allow participants to look at their own card to see how they “fit in” to the group. (Note where the different cards end up.)

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How were the groups formed? Number of stickers? Color? Kind? Or were they based on something that had nothing to do with the cards and stickers?

- Were you ever uncomfortable with your group placement? Did you change groups based on what you saw the others doing?

- If you had one of the “different” cards that were hard to put in group, how did you decide where to go? How did it feel to be “different”?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- How is this activity like everyday life? Do we always get to choose our groups?

- How does it feel when you prefer to be in a group other than the one you are in?

- What may be some benefits of accepting differences and having diversity in a group?

- Does the way we are grouped always represent who we really are? Why or why not?

CONCLUSION:

There are many ways to be “different,” and most of them involve differing values and priorities. Conflicts emerge when we cling so tightly to our own beliefs that we can’t recognize the value of others’. How diverse is your school? Neighborhood? Place of work? Group of friends? Is Diversity something you strive for in all aspects of our lives? There are many reasons you should, and hopefully this activity has given you some ideas about how to encourage Diversity and Accept Differences in your environment.

REFERENCES

- https://ampglobalyouth.org/2020/06/20/5-reasons-diversity-important-21st-century/
- http://texas4-h.tamu.edu

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