

STORY CIRCLES: BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

You are about to engage in a Story Circles experience. Below is some important information for you. Please read this first before you begin. Spend time in advance reflecting on #3 below so you are prepared to engage fully.

STORY CIRCLE GOALS RELATED TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATING ACROSS DIFFERENCE – here are some anticipated goals for this experience:

- Demonstrate respect for others
- Practice listening for *understanding*
- Cultivate curiosity about similarities and differences with others
- Gain increased cultural self-awareness
- Develop empathy
- Engage in critical reflection on one's own intercultural competence development, as well as on the intercultural experience
- Develop relationships with culturally different others

Remember:

- a) Every person has personal experience that can be shared.
- b) We all have something to learn from others.
- c) Listening for *understanding* can be transformational.

Story Circle Guidelines include:

- Be yourself;
- Speak from your own experience only;
- Speak truth from the heart;
- Keep it simple, clear, and focused;
- Uphold positive intent;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Tell your truth as you see it;
- Be comfortable in your own style (i.e. sit, stand, use gestures)

STORY CIRCLE INSTRUCTIONS:

Sit in a circle and briefly introduce yourself using the prompt provided by your story circle leader.

1. After introductions (#1), take turns sharing your story (using the prompt in #3 below)– the others need to listen for understanding and NOT interrupt, ask questions or make comments. Simply listen. Then the next person tells his or her story until all persons in the circle have told their stories – without interruption or comment. Be sure to listen carefully since you will be asked to share a “flashback” from each story at the end. A “flashback” is something that was memorable for you in the story. Be prepared to share this in 15 seconds or less for each story.
2. In 3 minutes or less, respond to the prompt provided by your story circle leader
3. Once all stories have been shared, then engage in the “flashback” time: Go back to the first story, and each person (other than the storyteller) shares a memorable part of the story (in 15 seconds or less). Then go on to the second story and so on, until “flashbacks” have been shared for all the stories told.
4. Once the “flashbacks” have been shared, together discuss some of the following questions in the remaining time. *
*Please monitor the time so the group can finish at the requested time.**

Discussion Questions:

- a) What common themes did you hear from the stories?
- b) What surprised you?
- c) What challenged you in the stories you heard?
- d) What did you learn about yourself through this experience?

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