

Activity: Shoes

Overview

Shoes explores self awareness, interpersonal awareness, and provides opportunities to learn how to develop comfort with different situations. In this activity, participants use placement of one of their shoes to signify how comfortable they feel when asked a series of questions. Appreciative questions can be asked that invite those who are comfortable in situations that support conflict resolution or management to share their experiences, their skills, their ideas, and suggestions.

Set Up

- One personal shoe from each participant
- One 12" x 12" mat, (or chair).

Place the mat or butcher paper in the center of the floor. The group stands in a large circle around the object.

Instructions

1. The facilitator opens the activity by making a statement or describing a situation which relates to conflict management, resolution, or understanding others. The mat represents complete personal comfort with the statement or situation.
2. Each participant then places his or her shoe on the floor in relation to the mat according to their comfort level with the statement or situation. The further away from the mat a shoe is placed, the more uncomfortable a person would be with the statement or situation. A shoe placed in the center of the mat is the most comfortable a person could be with the comment. Keep these thoughts in mind as you facilitate the activity:
 - Participants may pass.
 - Participants may place their shoe and then pass during the discussion.

Spend time addressing questions or comments after each shoe placement, and open conversation in the reflection component of this activity.

Sample Statements Or Situations:

- Confronting others
- Disagreeing verbally with others
- Being disagreed with
- Decision-making
- Speaking up; voicing your opinion
- Being in control
- Being out of control
- Asking questions
- Delegating
- Asking for help
- Taking risks
- Making mistakes
- Challenging authority
- Agreeing with others
- Giving in or compromising
- Following rules; taking orders
- Admitting you are wrong
- Including everyone; consensus leadership
- Leadership
- Listening attentively
- Putting oneself in another's position
- Drugs, alcohol, cigarettes
- Handling peer pressure
- Handling life's challenges

Story Line

For this activity, everyone will need to remove one shoe, and use it as a game piece. I will read you a series of questions or statements. Depending on your response, you will position your shoe in relation to the object in the center. If you completely agree with the question or statement, you may place your shoe directly on the object. If you disagree or do not associate with the statement, place your shoe further away. If you are somewhere in the middle, place your shoe accordingly. When you are finished placing your shoe, you will have a chance to discuss the comfort level of where you placed your shoe. Some questions or statements will require you to think, and some may be as "stinky" as the shoes in the center. Answer honestly and courageously, and this activity will be enlightening.

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Safety

Be sure to exercise caution when participants are moving around with one shoe removed. Use mutual respect and common sense when playing to create a safe environment.

Variations

1. Participants stand in a circle around the mat. After the facilitator makes the statement, participants stand in relation to the mat according to their comfort level with the statement or situation.
2. After the initial placement and discussion, participants are invited to go and “stand in someone else’s shoes” (preferably one that is significantly different from their position). The discussion then turns to imagining what it would be like to be in this position.
3. After the initial placement and discussion, participants partner (or form small groups) with those who placed his or her shoe “opposite” from theirs. They share their thoughts, feelings, concerns, and ideas. They have the opportunity to explore the others’ position and ask questions. They can make commitments to support one another about developing desired new skills. For example, someone may want to learn how to confront others effectively and feel comfortable doing so. They partner with someone who is already comfortable with this and ask for guidance, suggestions, and support in learning how to do the same

Reflection

Discover

- What was this activity like for you?
- What did you find most difficult? Least difficult?
- How does your position impact your ability to manage conflict, avoid conflict, or create conflict?

Connect

- What ways have you found to confront others effectively—ways that resolve conflict rather than escalate it?
- What beliefs do you hold that support your ability to _____ (e.g., confront another, let go of an argument)?
- What processes do you go through in making decisions easily? How do others respond to your decisions?
- What goes on for you mentally, emotionally, and/or physically when you _____? How do you manage or respond to that?
- In dealing with conflict, what behaviors, language, and thoughts are important for you to be aware of given your position?

Create

- What would have to happen in order for you to move closer to “comfort?”
- If you could move to another spot, where would you move and why? What benefits would this new position afford you in handling conflict? In order to move, what would you have to do? What beliefs would have to change for you? What fears would you have to release? What skills would you need to develop? What thought would you need to have? How can you do that?

Thanks to Chris Cavert and Laurie Frank for this activity. Games & Other Stuff for Teachers by Chris Cavert and Laurie Frank. Wood 'N' Barnes Publishing & Distribution, 1999.