

Activity: **Similarities**

Overview

Typically, people share more commonalities than differences. Unfortunately, the everyday focus is usually on the latter. *Similarities* opens conversation about how participants are alike, instead of how they are different. Participants connect with one another by discovering similarities, and build common ground by discussing the things that bring them together.

Set Up

- Chairs (optional if you choose to sit on the ground or stand in a circle)
- Participants form a circle of chairs, enough for each person less one.

Instructions

Ask for a volunteer to stand in the center of the circle. The volunteer must observe the seated participants and look for commonalities within the group. Next, he or she must choose one commonality to focus on. This could be height, clothing, brand of shoe or something more creative. One by one the volunteer asks individuals who share the chosen commonality to stand. The seated participants observe the process while attempting to figure out what the commonality is. The first person to identify the commonality becomes the next person in the center. Continue this process until you run out of time, or everyone has had an opportunity to be in the middle.

Story Line

On the horizon is a special project that your team wants, and you have submitted an aggressive bid for it. You have made it to the last stages in the bid process and there is one final test that you must pass. To be selected, you must have superior powers of observation, be capable of making fine distinctions, and be able to see subtle patterns where others might miss them. Your test is as follows: (deliver instructions at this point in the story).

Safety

General safety rules apply. Make sure the commonalities chosen are positive and appropriate, and will not hurt anyone in the group.

Variations

A variation is to begin with partners. Partners find something they have in common. After they have identified something, they seek another pair and create a group of four. The four must find something they all have in common which is different from either of the first two commonalities. Then groups of four seek out another group of four, and the eight find another unique commonality. This continues until the whole group is together, connected by one common thread.

Reflection

Sometimes what we share in common is not highly visible, but it nonetheless binds us. Draw out this idea:

Discover

- What results from discovering similarities? What thoughts and feelings about yourself in relation to others surfaced?
- How could a conflict between two people who have a number of similarities be different from one where they have not explored their similarities?

Connect

- How did you discover patterns of similarities?
- Did anything unusual occur? How can you transfer these ideas into your daily life?

Create

- What will you take away from this activity, and how can you use what you learned?
- How might your relationships with others, especially those with whom you are in conflict, change if your focus when with them was on finding commonalities/similarities?



Conflict Resolution

Initiating & Beginning Activities



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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.