WHEN I FELT DIFFERENT

Purpose

• To provide an opportunity for participants to share their feelings and emotions in circumstances in which they have felt different.
• To allow participants to reflect on how feeling different impacts self-esteem, teamwork, and productivity.
• To provide a new insight for participants who have never felt different.
• To allow participants to reflect on how long people remember the impact of feeling different.

When to Use

• At any time during a session.
• At the close of a session as a wrap-up.

Group Size

Unlimited.

Time Required

Forty-five to sixty minutes.

Materials

• Prepared chart (see “Prior to the Session” Instructions).
• Chart paper.
• Markers.
- Masking tape for posting charts.

**Physical Setting**

A room in which participants can be comfortably seated at tables and view charts.

**Handouts**

When I Felt Different Information Form.

**Instructions**

**Prior to the Session**

Prepare an "Instructions" chart similar to the one shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Complete the handout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Form a small group of three, preferably with people that you do not know and people you consider different in race, gender, age, and/or other characteristic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discuss your responses with other members of your group until a.m./p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Be prepared to share and discuss your experiences with the large group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**At the Session**

1. Give an overview of the activity and its purpose. The following introduction would be appropriate:

"This activity will give you an opportunity to examine the emotional implications of how feeling different impacts others. There are lots of opportunities for people to feel similar in work environments. When people feel similar, they feel welcomed and a part of the team. In most instances, people do not remember the feelings of being similar, because it is a comfortable experience. However, people do remember the experiences of feeling different, and many times the memory goes back to early years of education and the socialization process. With the changing work-force demographics, there are more opportu-
nities for feeling different because of the different cultures that are a part of the work force."

2. Begin the activity by sharing a time you felt different, describing the incident and how it influenced your life. This self-disclosure works best when the incident was a critical or pivotal one. (Note: Incidents of discrimination, prejudice, assumptions, stereotyping, isolation, and being singled out due to membership in a certain culture provide an excellent illustration. Set the tone for this activity. If the incident is seen as funny or frivolous, the impact of the feelings and emotions can be misleading. Frame the exercise in a serious tone.) (Five minutes.)

3. Distribute the handout to each participant and display the “Instructions” chart. Answer any questions participants have regarding the handout.

4. Allow five minutes for participants to fill out the handout. After four minutes say, “You have about a minute to complete the handout. When you finish, look for others who have also finished to form your group of three people. Be sure to use the criteria on the Instructions chart to choose your group. Discuss your experience: the circumstances, feelings, and messages about you. Discuss how you would respond to that experience if it happened today. Finish your discussion by ______ a.m./p.m.”

   Also write the finish time on the “Instructions” chart.

   Check in periodically with each small group to ensure equal time for sharing of experiences. (Twenty minutes.)

5. Reconvene the total group. Ask all the participants who had positive experiences to stand on one side of the room. Ask all of the participants who had negative experiences to stand on the other side of the room. Ask participants to observe how many people had negative and positive experiences.

6. Distribute chart paper and markers to both of the groups. Instruct the positive-experience group to record positive words on the chart paper to describe their experiences; ask the negative-experience group to do the same with negative words. (Five minutes.)

7. Place the completed charts next to each other and ask the participants to react to the positive versus negative words and discuss the possible impact on the workplace. Solicit insights regarding valuing and understanding diversity. (Ten minutes.)

8. Close the activity by discussing the implications for feeling different, given changing demographics. Ask participants to provide recommendations on how to help people have more positive experiences. Review the purpose of the activity. (Five minutes.)
Variations

• Before Instruction 8, ask for two or three volunteers to share their experiences and describe what they would do differently today.
• Eliminate Instructions 5, 6, and 7.
• Invite participants to share their stories with the total group. After all individuals have completed their forms, ask the participants to sit in a large circle. Instead of asking subgroups of three to discuss their responses privately, allow members of a subgroup to bring their chairs into the center of the circle and discuss their responses while the outer circle listens. Continue until all subgroups have shared their stories.

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WHEN I FELT DIFFERENT INFORMATION FORM

Instructions

Complete the information requested. After you have finished, form a group of three, preferably with people you do not know and people different from you in race, gender, age, and/or other characteristic. Please share the responses on this sheet with the people in your small group. Try to get in touch with the feelings and emotions that you felt during the experience.

1. Describe a time when you felt different.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Describe the experience. What were the circumstances?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Describe your feelings regarding this experience.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Describe the messages you received about yourself.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
5. Describe how you would respond to that experience today.