

A group program developed to increase young people's awareness of prejudices and biases, to help them avoid stereotyping.

OVERVIEW

It is important for young people to be aware of how family, friends, and institutions shape their views on race. Recognizing predispositions and prejudices is helpful for avoiding stereotyping.

LEADER PREPARATION

- Before the program, prepare a survey (see sample at the end of this discussion) to assess the group's preconceptions.
- Review relevant media and literature to find information on race relations. (Check the library, video store, current movies, and television shows.)
- Review music about race relations (i.e., Michael W. Smith's CD, "[Change Your World](#)"/DC Talk's CD, "[Jesus Freak](#)").
- Copy relevant articles for distribution and prepare video or TV selections and video/audio equipment for use.
- Prepare name tags, pencils, chalkboard, and/or an overhead projector.
- Organize the group(s). Group size should be no more than 8-10 individuals, as diverse as possible.

GROUP BUILDING

- Give each participant a name tag and a pencil. Divide the group into pairs. Ask each pair to spend 10 minutes interviewing each other, gathering interesting information (i.e., Where is the person from? Does he/she have siblings? What is his/her favorite ice cream?). After 10 minutes, have each group member introduce to the group the person that he/she interviewed.
- Play two relevant and appropriate musical selections.
- Distribute the survey to the group. Allow 15 minutes to complete.
- Take a 10-15 minute break; tally the survey results on a chalkboard or overhead projector.

GROUP PRESENTATION

Discuss the results of the survey and ask any of the following questions:

- Are you surprised by the results?
- Have you heard any of these assumptions before? From who or where?
- Do you still believe any of the assumptions are true? Why or why not?

Show selections from movies or television shows. Follow up with relevant questions such as:

- How did you feel about what you saw?
- Do you think the interactions between the black and white characters were realistic? Why or why not?
- Could you relate to how the white or black characters may have been feeling? In what ways did you relate?
- If you were in the situation depicted, how would you have related to the black/white person the same? Differently?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss any of the following questions:

- Where did you learn most of your information about blacks? About whites?
- Do you think the sources from which your information came were reliable? Why or why not?
- Do you think interactions between blacks and whites have improved? Why or why not?
- How would you personally go about making changes to avoid future stereotyping?
- How could you help your friends, family, church, or other organizations recognize and change stereotypes that lead to prejudice?

WRAP-UP

Encourage the participants to think about the following:

- Initiate a sincere, learning conversation with a member of the opposite racial group.

- Be aware of our own prejudices and be willing to change them.
- If you are white, recognize your possible position of privilege and to be sensitive to how it affects blacks.
- If you are black (or of another race), try not to generalize or exhibit anger towards all whites.
- Think about what influences your thinking; question its reliability and validity.
- Read literature (books, articles, poems, autobiographies, etc.) about black/white interactions and/or individuals.
- Acknowledge mistakes; seek forgiveness for unfairly stereotyping others.
- Stand against unfair, racist treatment by individuals or institutions.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The leader should close the program with interesting articles and practical suggestions that can be easily implemented in one's everyday life. If the group meets regularly (i.e., weekly, monthly) they can be challenged to share at the beginning of each meeting any encounters they have had with another race or any practical examples of changes they have personally made or helped others to make. The group can also plan field trips that will expose them to cross-racial experiences (i.e., worshipping in an all-black church, volunteering to work as a group in an inner-city setting on a community project).

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions are adapted from Beck, J.D. (1973). [The Counselor and Black/White Relations](#), Houghton Mifflin Company. Respond to the following by writing either true or false at the end of each statement.

- Color is unimportant in interpersonal relationships.
- Open recognition of color may embarrass blacks.
- Blacks are trying to use whites.
- "Liberal" whites are free of racism.
- Blacks are oversensitive.
- Whites are always trying to use blacks.
- All whites are deceptive.
- All whites will let you down in a crunch.

- All blacks are alike in their attitudes and behaviors.
- Blacks are angry.
- Whites cannot fully understand what it means to be black.
- Some whites have "soul."
- Blacks are capable of managerial maturity.
- Whites talk about, rather than to, blacks that are present.
- Whites often show annoyance at black behavior which differs from their own.
- Blacks often use "in-group" joking, laughing at whites in black culture language.
- Blacks use confrontation as their primary relationship style.
- Whites demonstrate interest in learning about black perceptions, culture, etc.
- Blacks show an interest in understanding white's point of view.
- Whiteness/blackness is a real difference, but not the basis on which to determine behavior.

IMPLICATIONS

- Many do not seriously examine or think about how they developed their attitudes towards other races.
- Many whites do not recognize the position of power and privilege they hold and how it negatively impacts blacks on many levels.
- The significance of this discussion for young people, parents, teachers, and youth leaders is to begin to break down in practical ways stereotypes that nurture the seeds of prejudice.

Specific uses and applications of the information for youth ministry, education, and helping professionals:

- Youth ministry leaders can use the discussion as part of a youth group experience or incorporate it into the Sunday School curriculum of junior and senior highs.
- Educators can incorporate the material as part of the curriculum of a core subject (i.e., social studies or history) or supplement a college course elective on racism, ethics, etc.
- Professionals can use the material as part of a training program (i.e., social workers or clergy attending a workshop on cross-cultural

counseling could supplement the workshop with this material).

Sheree A. Dropkin cCYS