

Guide to Going High When Others Go Low !

Use the best in you to bring out the best in others (*Mind Power).

Move beyond initial reactions based in cultural conditioning (*Hand Fold).

Resist competing when cooperation is more effective (*Thumb Wrestle).

Remember that no one does their best while under attack (*Hand Slap).

Broaden your focus - transition from scarcity to sufficiency (*Focus).

Expand your perspective to enhance creativity and wisdom (*Perspective).

Stop polarizing & get grounded in connection (*Polarization).

Use collaboration to enhance mutual investment (*RCC).

Use active listening/speaking to communicate with power (Listening Pairs).

Acquire the art of appreciation and acknowledgement (*Appreciations).

Seek compassion for our conditioning and courage for our humanity.

***Developed by the We Go High Project www.wegohighproject.org**

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS:

Mind Power Activity

Materials Needed:

- You will need one quarter inch flat metal washer and a fifteen inch string for each person. Tie one end of the string through the hole in the washer.

Instructions for Participants:

Everyone should have a washer that is tied to a string. Please hold the string out in front of you about level with your forehead. Now still the washer at the end of the string with your free hand. By using your focus and concentration look at the washer and see if you can get it to move side to side while keeping your hand as still as humanly possible. Once you've succeeded at this, try making the washer move front to back. Then when you are ready for the next step try to get the washer to move clockwise in a circle or counter clockwise.

Processing Points:

This activity is our reminder that we have amazing hidden capacities. When we are grounded in the reality that we have the capacity to do things we don't yet know we can do so much more is possible than ever before. I implore you to fully open yourself to your brilliance, your magnificence, your power and your possibility!

In the movie Phenomenon, George Mally, who is dying of a brain tumor that has caused him to discover what we would call "special powers" is asked by his best friend to explain the meaning of life. His answer to his friend is that he already knows it! He says "everything we need is already in us, we just need to clear away the crud it is buried under... love is buried under fear, partnership is buried under competition and compassion is buried under greed. Much of being effective in life is about clearing away what ever is in the way of your capacity to access your true self – someone who is good, powerful, smart and connected to others - and helping others to do this as well.

Variation: This can be done with your eyes closed. It takes more concentration but it works. So if you have participants with visual impairments have someone pair up with them and let them know when the washer is moving. You can also pair up any group of participants and have them take turns trying it with their eyes closed while the other one watches to report when it is working.

More Extensive Instructions (from Activities that Teach by Jackson):

Y Have each participant hold their string up in front of their face so that the washer hangs about six inches away from their eyes. This position will make it look like they are going to try and hypnotize themselves. Their arms, elbows and hands must not be touching anything such as a desk or a chair. Now have them stop the washer from swinging by using their other hand to stop its motion. Tell them that they are going to make the washer start to swing by using their eyes. Have them focus their eyes on the washer and start to move their eyes back and forth while holding their hand still. While they are

doing this you should be slowly saying "left to right, left to right". Repeat this phrase over and over again until their washers start to swing back and forth.

- Y If you want to really amaze them, change the commands to "front to back, front to back, front to back". Tell them to move their eyes up and down while watching the washer. The washer will slowly change directions and start moving front to back. Now change the command to "around and around". Have them move their eyes in a circle and watch the washer. It will slowly start moving in a circle.
- Y This is not magic. Most participants will be able to control the washer to some degree. Much of it depends on their concentration and how easily distracted they are. The reason that this exercise works is the mind sends messages to the hand to move the washer in the same direction as the commands you are saying. Those individuals with "fine motor skills" will be able to have it respond best. Those with less well developed fine motor skills or little concentration will see little or no movement.

Adapted by Marilyn Levin www.marilynlevin.com from Activities That Teach pgs.164-166 Jackson, T. (1993). *Activities that teach*. New York: Red Rock Publishing.

Hand Fold Activity

Procedures:

Ask participants to clasp their hands together while you demonstrate (hands together with interwoven fingers like for prayer). Tell participants to just relax and shout out how this feels. Wait for a response or two, repeating each one out loud, and then ask - What else and wait for another response and repeat that out loud. Now ask participants to notice which thumb is on top and to switch and put their other thumb on top. Then ask them to re-lace their hands together. Now ask "how does this feel?" And take several responses and repeat them out loud. If responses to the first are positive and the second are negative you are ready to proceed but if the responses to both the original hand fold and the second hand fold are both negative, then ask the group to respond to how the second one feels in comparison to the first one. This will bring out the group feeling that the first one felt better than the second one.

Then you explain to the group that "We know that one of these isn't evil and one is good. One is just what we are used to and the other is what we are not used to. So it is a reminder that we are raised in a culture that teaches us to have a negative emotional reaction to things we are not used to or familiar with. Now we don't need to see a therapist about this or feel guilty about this, but it is very useful to be aware of this tendency. Then when we are exposed to something that is new to us or different than what we are used to we can expect that we will likely react negatively. And we can have the patience to delay judgment based on our initial reaction and evaluate things for their true value and not their initial appeal.

Processing Point:

Point out the importance of putting ourselves in situations to develop awareness and empathy for people in the minority. Yes we can intellectually understand what it must be like for people who are in the minority by reading and talking about the topic but there is NO substitute for regularly experiencing the emotions of dealing in an environment where you are the only one or one of just a few like you. This is especially important for people to do around their areas of privilege because privilege conditions us to not notice what it is like for others without privilege.

Examples that come to mind –

- Attend a Hmong New Year celebration and engage in all of the activities without knowing the language or customs.
- Participant in activities that involve people outside of your class and economic status.
- Attend a religious ceremony that is open to visitors that is very different from your own.
- Arrange to play a card or board game that you are completely unfamiliar with and have the leader only explain a few of the rules (and/or have them explain them to you in an incomplete or confusing manner).
- Prepare to go to a foreign country where you do not speak but a few words of the language and make a plan of action as to how you might purchase a small business with only minimal assistance from some one who has knowledge in this area.

Processing Point:

When we embark on new learning it is helpful to remember that what is different than we are used to may initially feel wrong. It will be essential to use the wisdom of all cultures (including the ones that seem wrong to us) and to respect our inter-connectedness to solve the problems of our time in this global community. This will require that we learn to create space for embracing what will seem to be mutually exclusive beliefs and practices. Learning to hold multiple, seemingly conflicting truths is an essential skill for a global citizen

Thumb Wrestling

Procedures:

Have participants get into the thumb wrestling position with someone next to them and wait for instructions.

Y Explain to participants that there are two things to know: #1: how to score a point (gently pin someone's thumb down - explain that this is a non-violent activity and make a joke about no nail marks, hair pulling or biting) and #2: the object of the activity is for everyone to get as many points as possible. Repeat these two things if needed. Then explain that they need to keep track of their individual points.

Y Then say, ready, go. Let them play for a few minutes until you see some people are cooperating (letting each other score points) and some are competing. You should end the game when there are still some people competing.

Y Then you say, stop, put your thumbs down. Then you find out how many points people got. In a small crowd of 15 or less, you can go to individual people and find out how many points they got. In the larger groups you'll want to say, now raise your hands if you got 10 or fewer points. That will probably be the majority of everyone present. Then you say, if you got 11-25 points, raise your hands, and finally 26 or more. Ask the 26 or more group how many they got. People will wonder what happened - did groups cheat?

Y Then you can say, so it is obvious that the groups who got 26 or more points did something different than most groups. Then have a group who each scored 26 or more points demonstrate their technique to the group. At this point things become visually obvious to the participants. Ask, why would they have done the activity this way?

People then begin to remember that the point was for **everyone** to get as many points as possible.

Y You then explain “What we did here was put you in a competitive environment and give you a cooperative goal. And even though we are probably some of the more cooperative people around, this activity demonstrates that most of us will be drawn toward competition by habit even when cooperation would get both parties more of what they want. We all live in a very competitive society. What is unfortunate is that even when competition isn’t the best approach, we end up using it. Because the cultural conditioning is so strong, we need to make a conscious effort to notice when we fall into the habit of competing and ask ourselves is there a win-win solution here that I am not yet seeing?”

Processing Point:

Scarcity - There was an unlimited amount of points to go around in this activity, but most of us got stuck in the mindset of scarcity because of our training in competitiveness. We are taught to focus on personal gain more than on mutual benefit. We are trained by capitalism to believe that there is an us versus them dichotomy, that there is not enough to go around, that more is better and that we should resign ourselves to accepting this. In Lynne Twists book, *The Soul of Money*, she examines these lies of scarcity and invites us to experience the gift of sufficiency. Sufficiency is the perfect place of enough resources to thrive.

Because of this training in the mindset of scarcity, most of us go through life making decisions on money by default by following along with the culture of materialism thinking this will lead to happiness since most of the messages we get tell us this is the **ONLY** way. Choosing to become conscious about our relationship with money and make the initially tough decisions to let go of the superficial promises of fulfillment from material things, leads us to a deeper sense of wholeness, power and hope than we could have imagined before. When we begin to transform our lives in order to be known for what we allocate and generate, we let go of the need to over accumulate material possessions and instead accumulate a deep sense of fulfillment and worth.

Processing Point: Competitiveness - Our over emphasis on competitiveness has us falling into the habit of competing even when we would gain more from a cooperative approach. We also misapply competition by using it in ways that are a detriment to our relationships and our lives – like becoming addicted to winning at all costs and by putting competition and winning above the wellbeing of our relationships or our lives.

What if we decided to compete in a way that was uplifting and empowering to all participants? What if we realized that even more than annihilating our opponents in sporting or other talent based competitions, we wanted to find a way to join with them and end the mutual destruction that comes from seeing each other as enemies? What if we redirected our need for success that brings power over people, material excess and harm to others and took on humanities largest, toughest challenges?

- See Transforming Separation into Connection Chapter for more content.
- See the World We Envision and Tips for Transforming Conflict Handouts.
- See Tug of War Activity for more on this theme.
- Read *The Soul of Money* for much more related content.

Variations:

Cross the Line - If you've already done thumb wrestling with a group you can make the same point again with this activity. Have participants pair up and stand across from each other. Have them draw an imaginary line on the ground in between the two of them. Now tell them that all they need to know is that the person who gets the other person to cross their line is the winner. Some people use force or manipulation but some people agree to both cross over and both win.

Rock Paper Scissors - If your group still needs an insight around competitiveness you can play rock paper scissors. Just set it up with the goal being for everyone to get as many points as possible.

Hand Slap Activity

Instructions for the Participants:

For the next activity you need to find a partner. Get into the position for playing the nasty hand slapping game so many of us played in grade school. For those of you who were spared this evil game, one person has their palms facing down and positioned directly over the other persons palms which are facing up. The person in the palms up position tries to come around and slap the hand of the other person before they pull their hands away.

If you are the slapper (palms up person) in this version of the game you also give the slapee (palms down person) 4 or 5 simple addition and subtraction questions while trying to slap their hands before they pull away. Do this and then trade roles so each person gets to be the slapper and the slapee. Once both people have experienced the challenge of attempting math while under attack, we will discuss the results.

So how many of you were able to successfully do math while under attack? On occasion some people succeed by using one of two methods. Either they choose to care about the math and let themselves be slapped or they forget about doing the math well and focus on not getting slapped. But most people are not able to do math well while under the threat of attack.

This activity is a powerful reminder that none of us will ever do our best work while under attack. And we never even have to slap the person for them to know that we are a threat. The game is the set up. This is another piece of our cultural conditioning that interferes with our magnificence - persecution, of others and of ourselves. In a world that emphasizes competition, judgment, criticism and fear of difference, we have created an environment that is not conducive to the best work of anyone involved.

Processing Points:

Feeling Good About Ourselves - So it will make sense to practice feeling really good about who we are on our way to believing it. When we come from a place that is deeply confident about our goodness as human beings, we have the strength to face up to the ways we are not our best selves without self persecution or defensiveness. When we feel truly good about who we are we reduce our participation in self pity parties, efforts to prove how good we are and obsessions about what other will think of us. This saves an amazing amount of wasted time and energy that we can redirect toward making a difference in the world!

Feeling good about yourself is the best place from which to grow. Without it, it is too easy to shut down to the inhumanity that exists in the world, to be defensive about what feels like an

inability to make real change in the world, and to be sucked into judgment instead of deepening the massive compassion needed to solve current world problems.

Self Attacks – The environment we spend the most time in is our internal environment (inside our own heads). So if we are doing things that are self attacking we are inhibiting ourselves from doing our best work. It is extremely useful to learn to end negative, critical, demeaning self talk and replace it with self talk that is supportive and empowering. One thing that would surely impact our efforts to make the world a better place, would be for everyone to learn to unconditionally love themselves. When we are at peace with ourselves, we have no need to judge, criticize or demean others.

Potential Processing Questions:

In what ways do you feel under attack from the external world? From your internal world? Are there things that you could do better if you didn't feel under attack or pressured by external or internal forces? Are there ways you create an environment that feels attacking to others? If so, how? Are there steps you would consider taking to change any of this? If so what?

Activity adapted by Marilyn Levin, www.marilynlevin.com from Gary Hollander Enterprises www.garyhollander.com

Focus Activity

Instructions for participants:

Curve both of your hands to create a scope and put it on one eye. Keep that eye open and close the one without the scope. Now try to find various items in the room as I call them out (facilitator should leave enough time for people to find the item before moving on to the next item) – find someone you like, find a light fixture, find something blue, find some shoes you like, find an exit sign. Now take the scope off and open both eyes and let's try it again. Find something yellow, find someone who you don't know well, find a different light fixture, find a briefcase or backpack, and finally find a logo of any company on anything. What we notice in doing this is that when we narrow our focus it makes it harder to find what we want. This activity is a metaphor for how an extreme focus on materialism and accumulation limits our view of everything. It creates a context where our focus is so narrow we have difficulty noticing what is out there that is truly meaningful to us. (Activity adapted from Lynne Twist – put citation here)

Lynne Twist, Global Activist and author of “The Soul of Money”, explains in her book that this mindset of scarcity has trapped us in a system where no matter how excessively we accumulate, we never have a sense of enough. This goes beyond possessions to create a sense that we as individuals are not enough (good enough, attractive enough, successful enough, and so on). The good news is that we can consciously shift our experience of life away from scarcity towards sufficiency. Sufficiency, Lynne explains, is that perfect place of enough. Just as in a garden, in our lives, we fail to flourish when there is too little or way too much of what we need. Most of us are unawarely caught in a pursuit of more – bigger, better, faster – which doesn't bring us the satisfaction we are promised. When we transform our lives to be about what we allocate, generate and contribute, we let go of the need to over accumulate material possessions and instead accumulate a deep sense of fulfillment and worth. (Soul of Money Citation here)

Processing Questions:

Start with scarcity - To what degree do you think you are focused on scarcity? What about others in your life – your friends, family etc? What are things you obsess about acquiring? What do others you know focus on getting more and more of? Name all of the things you can think of that you don't feel you have enough of. How does this focus effect how you feel about yourself? What are the ways in which you don't feel like enough- smart enough, cute enough, powerful enough and so on?

Then shift to sufficiency - . How often in your day do you notice you have enough of something? What might life be like if you didn't need to go after bigger better, faster, more most of the time? How might you feel different if you felt like enough most of the time – smart enough, cute enough, talented enough?

- See Transforming Scarcity into Sufficiency Chapter for more content.
- See the following activity write ups for more activities with this theme: Stuff Happens, Line Ups (materialism, scarcity, sufficiency, appreciation), Listening pairs (cherishing life, noticing enough, cost of scarcity, gifts of sufficiency) and musical chairs.
- Recommended reading: The Soul of Money, by Lynne Twist

Other Possible Processing Themes:

Self Validations - When we are focused too heavily on do they like me, love me , respect me, believe me, value me, etc we are missing out on noticing the opinion of the only person that matters – ourselves. No one will ever succeed in making us feel loved, respected, valued etc if we do not believe it ourselves!

Broad Perspective - So as you experienced, it took much more effort to locate things when your view was restricted versus when you came to the challenge with a full spectrum of vision. When we come to the challenges we face with a broad perspective, open to the infinite possibilities available, this maximizes our creativity in developing solutions and empowers us to be bravely confident and hopeful about our success.

Adapted by Marilyn Levin, www.marilynlevin.com from Lynn Twist, www.soulofmoney.org.

Perspective Activity -

Instructions for Participants:

Let's consider some of the cultural conditioning that interferes with our ability to come at life and respond to others from the very best of who we are. Hold your hand as high in the air as you can with your finger pointed at the ceiling and draw a clockwise circle with this finger in the air. Now continue drawing this clockwise circle in the air with your finger pointed toward the ceiling and slowly bring your hand down to the point where you are circling at the level of your stomach. Look down and notice that the circle is now going counter clockwise. So what happened? Your perspective shifted, the circle's direction did not. This activity demonstrates the power of perspective. The first thing that we must get it that there is not A reality – only perspectives on reality.

Deepak Chopra explains that there is no such thing as reality that is independent of who perceives the reality. Take a flower for instance. Human beings (who have sight) visually perceive the color and texture of the flower. A bee will not see the flower in the same way humans do. It will experience the flower as ultraviolet wavelengths. A bat will have yet another

perception of the reality of a flower – as the echo of ultrasound. So whose reality is accurate – well all of these and more are completely accurate depending on who is doing the perceiving of the reality. (Cite Flaws of Perception article).

So we constrain ourselves when we decide our perspectives are the right ones, when we limit our access to a broad range of wisdom and when we fail to embrace multiple ways of knowing and being. Certainly, if history is any indication, parts of what we now KNOW to be true or fact will turn out to be incomplete, inaccurate or just plain wrong. So it can be useful to loosen our grip on what we KNOW to be true and be open to wisdom that differs from ours. We get to remember that we are most often not aware of the paradigms we function within – it is a lot like trying to explain the reality of a world that is orange without noticing that we have on orange glasses. (What the Bleep do we know study guide citation)

It will be essential to use the wisdom of all cultures (including the ones that seem wrong to us) and to respect our inter-connectedness to solve the problems of our time in this global community. This will require that we learn to create space for embracing what will seem to be mutually exclusive beliefs and practices. Learning to hold multiple, seemingly conflicting truths is an essential skill to coexist in a global world.

Possible Processing Questions:

How open to others perspectives do you think you are? How open do you think others are to your perspectives? If there is a big difference between these two is it that you are more open minded than most or are you less open minded than you think? How hard would it be for you to change your perspective on some of your most deeply held beliefs or positions? What would it take to change your mind? What are some things that we used to believe a long time ago that we now know are not true? What might we believe now that later on we will discover is not accurate?

- See Transforming Our Worldview Chapter for more content.
- See the following activity descriptions for more activities with this theme: 100 Year Activity, Redefinition activity

Facilitator Note:

This activity is ideal to use as an introduction to other activities where you want to encourage people to be open to exploring other's perspectives, beliefs and ideas. For example using the perspective activity prior to the Take a Stand Activity.

Polarization Activity

Instructions for Participants: Another piece of our cultural conditioning that interferes with our magnificence is polarization. Try this visualization activity with me. Relax in your chair and think of someone you really love, someone who is a joy to be around, someone who makes you feel wonderful. Be present to what this is like for you emotionally and physically. Now think of someone you hate, someone who makes you angry, someone who's values and behavior make you sick, someone who causes an intense negative reaction when you are around them. Notice what this is like for you emotionally and physically. The point of this exercise is to remind us that our judgment and hatred is damaging to us (not to those who are the objects of our displeasure). It is like swallowing poison and expecting it to hurt our enemies. It also reminds us that the love we feel for others can be a great healing force in our lives. If we can rethink and

reframe our relationship to our adversaries and enemies we can see that our participation in fueling hatred is damaging to us and our efforts to find love for our enemies can be healing to us. (Us versus them article citation)

It will be productive for us to disengage in the polarization that has become such a way of life. Each time we vilify those who do not share our point of view, we actually increase their power and expand the divide between them and us. We can ask ourselves - am I fueling the polarization between red and blue states? Am I making those who disagree with me wrong and evil for their beliefs? OR Am I building bridges of understanding between people who would consider me an adversary or who I would consider an enemy? Am I reaching out across any and all divides in my life to reclaim the bond that all human being share? Am I striving to communicate and behave in ways that help everyone on the planet access their shared humanity?

Possible Processing Questions:

How much of our energy is focused on judging and being displeased with others? How much of our energy is focused on loving and caring for others? How might our lives be different if we increased our focus on love and decreased our focus on hate? Are there ways in our lives that we are trying to reach across differences or heal polarizations? How can we start, if we are not already doing this, or increase our efforts if we are already doing so?

Processing Points:

Self Attacks - It is very useful to unlearn the practice of polarization because the same skills and energy we use to direct judgment and criticism at others is what we direct inward in self doubt and attacks.

Health Costs – There are physical and mental health costs to participating in polarization. What physical and mental issues of ours might be partially a result of polarization (any stress related problems would qualify)? Are these health costs worth it?

Our World – We are unlikely to successfully address the global crisis we are currently facing with the degree of polarization that exists in the world today. What commitments are you willing to make in ending your participation in polarization?

Resistance, Cooperation or Collaboration Activity

Preparation:

Many of us contribute important work in the world. And most of that work requires us to work with other people to accomplish tasks or make progress. In addition, we are frequently asked to assist others, perhaps on work groups, joint projects, special assignments or volunteer positions. The manner in which we work together contributes greatly to both the quantity and quality of our output. This activity is designed to illuminate three specific styles of joint participation, followed by discussion inspired by the feelings that these styles trigger in each of us.

Procedures:

Have everyone choose a partner and stand facing their partner. Partners should clasp their hands together by interlocking fingers. Choose one person to be the lead and instruct the other person to physically resist the movements. The lead should attempt to move the pair's arms in any way

they like (that doesn't cause harm) for about 30 seconds. Ask them to switch roles. Explain that this represents resistance.

Next, maintaining the same position (facing partner with hands clasped) choose one person to be the lead and instruct the other person to be physically passive and allow the movements. Again, allow about 30 seconds, then have them switch roles. Explain that this represents cooperation.

Finally, have them maintain the same position and explain that no one should lead or resist the effort. They should attempt to move together. Allow for a minute or two as the sudden collaboration may inspire some fun choreography. Explain that the final activity represents collaboration.

Processing Point:

Ask the group how the activity went for them and what emotions each style triggered. Ask why they think people resist (misinformation, sabotage, personality conflicts, etc.). Discuss different reasons that people cooperate (outside pressure, just don't care, trust the leader, etc.). Focus on how it felt to collaborate. Point out that you get a synergy from both people being invested in what is going on. Ask if they can identify ways that they force people to cooperate or resist when, in actuality, they want people to collaborate.

Processing Point:

Explore how the system of oppression impacts resistance, cooperation and collaboration. Cover things like power differentials, internalized oppression, privilege, emotional baggage and cultural conditioning that interferes with creating a world that works for everyone.

Adapted by Bobbi L. Beale, Psy.D. blbeale@neo.rr.com

Listening Pairs Activity

Listening Pairs is an EXTREMELY valuable tool. It can be used by itself to process or as a primer before large group processing. It can also be used in a variety of ways beyond just processing.

Standard Format:

Put participants in pairs. Explain that they are about to learn the tool of listening pairs. Explain that one person in the pair will be the listener and the other will be the talker. The listener only listens and the talker talks or is silent (or just enjoys the attention from the listener) if they run out of something to say. The talker is not allowed to ask questions or offer feedback or advice – they ONLY listen. The listener remains relaxed and projects a calm confidence that the talker is a good person who is capable of figuring out anything they need to figure out. The facilitator times this process and tells the pairs when to switch roles (and to thank their listener when they are finished talking). Each person while in their listener role needs to remember that they may not comment on anything the person talked about during their time to talk or afterwards unless they get permission to do so first.

Time Frames: a good length of time is usually 2 to 4 minutes each way within a pair, but even 1 minute each way can be worth doing. As groups become more familiar with this tool you can increase the time in order to delve more deeply into a topic. Be aware through that listening pairs that are longer than 7 or 8 minutes can feel uncomfortable for some people. As the

familiarity in using this tool and the safety in the group increases, you can have groups evolve into going as long as 20 or 30 minutes each way. Though the longer the time frame and the safer the group the more intense the sharing and feelings can become.

Role of the Listener: the listener should be relaxed and confident that the talker is offloading their stuff and is an intelligent and good person who can figure out how to solve their own problems. Listen with rapt attention – really focus!

Role of the Talker: Try to let go of feeling bad about anything that comes up for you. To remember that your listener thinks well of you and has confidence in you. To remember that you are clearing out and offloading what you need to get ride of and reinforcing what you need to remember.

Different Uses:

Processing – helping participants think about a topic or an experience before (or instead of) sharing about it with a group of people.

Cultural Difference – giving people a different cultural way of communicating to notice how going outside of your norms feels

Attention – providing quality attention to participants so they can feel heard and offering a chance to develop the art of listening well.

Feelings – Creating a safe place for offloading emotional baggage or being cared about while we show the places where we struggle.

Variations:

Sufficiency – Focus on cherishing how amazing your life is, noticing how much you are enough, appreciating all that you have that enriches your life.

Scarcity – Focus on the cost (or impact) of scarcity in your life or in our world.

Stereotypes -Identify your areas of privilege (or areas of marginalization) and explore stereotypes, judgments and misinformation people would have about you. Do this as a whole person or do it with a focus on a particular identity.

Separation– Facilitator make the statement “Consider the possibility that what I am about to say to you is true – That the only thing that needs to be healed is our sense of separation”. Have participants do a listening pair on their reaction to this statement. Then have them create one (or more) examples of something they can do (or will commit to do) to heal their sense of separation (Thanks to Lea Arellano for this variation.).

Self Talk Loud Speaker - focus on your negative self talk so you can really notice it and its impact on you. All too often our self talk is cranky, negative, bossy, rigid, hopeless and in victim mode. When we can offload this and clean this up so we can be contented and powerful. Once the majority of our self talk is hopeful, flexible, empowering, loving and joyful – our experience of life will be as well.

Listening Quality – Do listening pairs first where listener is totally not listening, then when listener is trying to listen but is distracted by physical or emotional pain, then when listener is listening with complete attention.

Prejudice - Focus on how a person you love has suffered from bias, prejudice, oppression. Then focus on a group of people you have bias against or have treated with prejudice. Focus on given your identities, what biases, prejudices and stereotypes might someone have about you. Focus on what do you never want to hear or have happen to someone you care about (re bias etc.) or focus on this for yourself.

Practice Reactions – Use listening pairs to practice tough situations that you don't want to face or expect to face with someone safe (your listener) before you try to deal with the real thing. Choose situations where you tend to freeze or not know what to do. Try all kinds of approaches in your listening time and offload feelings that interfere with you knowing you can handle this! (Thanks to Lea Arellano for this variation)

Processing Points:

- Clearing versus Hanging on - There is a difference between clearing out or offloading the thoughts and feelings and perspective we share in our listening pairs and hanging on to them in our listening pairs. For those feelings, thoughts and perspectives that don't serve us well in life, we want to practice learning to release them, clear them or offload them in the listening pairs. With this, we can start to retrain ourselves to spend less and less of our energies focused on the things we want to clear out and more and more time focused how to flourish.
- Remember that when we are clouded by emotional baggage, we don't do our best thinking. Often when we are in a tizzy about something, we may think that we are thinking clearly, but others around us can tell we are not.
- We have the need to speak our experience and our truth, to be heard and have aware witnesses to the struggles and pain that has come from living in an oppressive culture. When we speak from this place to create release and healing we need to be able to do with complete freedom of expression, without the need to make sense or be kind or be in touch with our best selves. We need spaces where we can offload and clear out the emotional baggage of being taught to judge and hate and surrender parts of our humanity. We need compassionate, loving people to witness this healing while remaining clear about our goodness, our power and our capacity to heal. Each of us needs ongoing support to heal the oppressed and the oppressor within.
- One purpose of the listening partnership is to offload frustrations and feelings and concerns that inhibit us from effectively handling things. If we think of times in our lives when we were flooded with intense emotions we can remember that during that crisis our thinking was not very clear. When we are flooded with emotions it clouds our thinking. And since we live in a culture that values emotional control and not emotional flow, many of us are severely limited in being able to offload old emotional baggage even when it continues to interfere with our lives in huge ways. So it can be very useful to create, over time, listening relationships where it is safe to offload emotional baggage.
- It can be therapeutic just to have someone listen to us in a relaxed manner when we're in crisis because we are so used to people listening to us in crisis having a pained look or trying to fix us or being really worried about us, so it's empowering to have a relaxed confidant person there to listen to us.

- Explore the role of eye contact in the activity. Make the point that eye contact is not a sign of respect in every culture. I like to tell the story about a friend of mine named Kiyoko Fiedler who has an Austrian-American father and a Japanese-American Mother and when they were both mad at her, the father would say, “Look at me when I’m talking to you.” The mother would be saying, “Don’t look at me when I’m talking to you.” It is useful to remember that things have different meanings in different cultures.

Great Questions to explore in Listening Pairs include:

- What feelings interfere with me moving forward on this issue?
- What feelings get in the way of me being my most fabulous around this?
- What feelings keep me from being my very best self here?
- How can I develop support in my life to offload these feelings and reclaim my passion and power to make a difference?
- What would have to shift in ME for me to experience my work as a joy and a privilege most of the time?
- What are the feelings that interfere with me being completely powerful in diversity work?
- What feeling, belief, struggle, distress etc do you need to set aside today to contribute to this endeavor to your fullest capacity?
- What do you need from this group of people in support?
- What feeling, belief, struggle, distress etc do you need to set aside today to contribute to this endeavor to your fullest capacity.
- What do you need from this group of people to feel fully supported?

The tool of using of Listening Pairs comes from many practices. Marilyn gets much of what she uses here from Re-Evaluation Counseling.

Appreciations - AMAZINGLY IMPORTANT & INCREDIBLY USEFUL

Appreciate, appreciate, appreciate – appreciate yourself and others frequently in multiple ways. Build people up towards what you know they can become and praise them every step of the way. There are numerous ways to do this – examples include: begin or end all gatherings or meetings with appreciations, set up appreciation bags for people to put notes in to (see activity description), designate one person per day and have everyone in the send them appreciations in all forms (verbal. email, cards, singing telegrams, you name it).

Strengthen your skills in the art of appreciation and acknowledgement is one of the most powerful tools that exists for social transformation. We will almost always have more success when we praise, acknowledge, encourage and inspire people into their greatness rather than criticizing or admonishing them for their shortcomings.

Other ways to appreciate and acknowledge include:

Listening Pairs: Use the listening pairs format to appreciate and acknowledge others (see activity write up).

Appreciation Mingle: Have participants mingle around with the purpose of giving every person one verbal appreciation and a hug or a bow.

Appreciation Sheets: Have each person put their name on the top of a piece of paper and decorate the border of sheet. Then have everyone in the group write an admirable trait or quality on each person's sheet to express what they like/admire about them. Then have everyone sit in a circle and read off their own sheets by starting with "I am" and then reading each quality out loud. If you choose to process this activity you can cover a number of possible topics. Self esteem, need for approval, fear of rejection and need for acknowledgement are examples.

Pleased and Proud Appreciations: Use circle format with one person in the middle. The person in the middle says "I am pleased and proud that I" and says a self appreciation out loud then they say "I am also pleased and proud that the group" and says an appreciation for the group. If the other members in the circle agree with that group appreciation, they need to change places in the group while the person who started in the middle gets a spot in the circle and leaves a new person to give their appreciations.

Appreciation Panel: Have participants do a horseshoe lineup on how often they are appreciated in their lives. Then have the half of the horseshoe that experiences more appreciation in their lives shower the other half of the horseshoe with a standing ovation of applause, yipping and hooting and whistling. If the group is too sedate, encourage them to pretend that their favorite sport team just won the biggest thing ever. Then ask the receiving half how that felt. Then have the receiving half switch and now give the raucous applause back to the other half of the group. Mention how powerful it would be if we used the same amount of passion and energy and resources we use to support the sports teams and celebrities we love to cheer on and support people that make the world a better place. This can be done silently by sending loving energy as an alternative (with hugs if appropriate).

Secret Supporter or Secret Guardian Angel – Assign everyone in the group to be someone's supporter or angel. Make this a secret until it is revealed at the end. Or you may choose to not reveal it. The goal of the secret supporter is to think of creative and secret ways to appreciate, encourage, support and empower their designated person. The only thing to watch for with this is it can become a competition about who the best supporter is.

Appreciation Jar (Thanks to Linda Seidel for this activity). Have a group of people write affirmation/appreciations on small pieces of paper. Write enough of them for one per day for the length of time you want them have the affirmations - the next week, next month, and next year. Put these in a beautiful jar or container. Give this to the person as a parting gift and a remembrance of your caring. To make it look good put the affirmations on different colors of paper and fold them into fun shapes.

A Circle of Kindness

Form a double circle with all group members, with one partner facing the center of the circle, and their partner behind them (also facing the center, with their hands on the shoulders of the inner circle person). The inner circle is asked to close their eyes, and only reply, "thank you" or keep silent. The outer circle is asked to quietly talk into the ear of the inner circle participants, mentioning something important that they learned from them or appreciated about them during the project, or a pleasant memory, or any other positive comment. The outer circle then moves one person to the right and continues. When the outer group has completed the circle, they are asked to become the center group, and the process begins for a second round. Source www.teamworkandteamplay.com