

Recognizing Reasons for Differences

A Bear of a Puzzle

Purpose: To meet and discover:

- reasons for differences among (between) people.
- value of differences
- value of utilization of differences in people

Audience: Adults who work with youth and other adults to develop community.

Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Supplies: Copies of the handout A Bear of a Puzzle; markers or crayons
scissors

Facilitation points: Help participants recognize commonalities and differences among themselves and other people.

Think of each person as a compilation of puzzle pieces. Some puzzle pieces will match some of yours - others will not.

Others may look different, sound different, dress differently. They may have different life experiences, customs, cultural backgrounds, beliefs or religious practices. They may have different abilities. They may live in different house or within different families.

See differences as opportunities. Differences can be valuable to groups, families, organizations, communities.

Being different is okay.

Individuals should not expect to be like the other (another) person. The focus is to understand why we are different .

Treat each individual with respect and understanding regardless of the differences.

Variation: Using "puzzle piece fabric" from National Autism Society, sew and stuff teddy bears for educational props.



Activity:

1. Hand out A Bear of a Puzzle and markers or crayons to individuals.
2. Ask each participant to use the markers or crayons to shade each puzzle piece randomly and uniquely. The result will be a special set of colors, connected in differing patterns, like a fabric.
3. Next label each colored puzzle piece as if it were a piece of you. For example: You were born in a certain place and time, raised in a type of family, experienced a style of housing, were educated in certain ways, experienced a set of happenings, became involved in activities, believed certain things to be true, collected or chose things/persons of value to you, developed a style of communicating and making choices. How would you describe each of those pieces of yourself?
4. Turn over the fabric and cut out the shape of the bear.

Discussion: In small groups (3-5), ask participants to show and talk about components of their bears.

Reflect: After 5 – 10 minutes, ask groups

- Is your tendency to search first for similarities or differences?
- Describe how you interacted when you discovered similarities. Differences?
- How do we communicate to one another that the difference is okay?
- Describe attributes of groups whose "bears" are of more diverse fabric?

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