



Personal Appreciation Bags

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Activity: Ice Breaker – Introductions and Personalization/ Community Builder

Materials:

- Brown Paper, Lunch Bags – 1 per participant
- Art Supplies (markers, colored pencils, etc.) to decorate bags
- Painters Tape/ Tacks to hang bags

Directions:

1. At the start of a special workshop, class or meeting, facilitator reviews Personal Appreciation Bags activity and provides a brown, lunch bag to each participant.
2. Using markers, participants write their names on their Personal Appreciation Bags.
3. In addition to their names, to prepare for their introductions participants draw symbols/ pictures or write on the OUTSIDE AND INSIDE of their Personal Appreciation Bags using the following guidelines:
 - OUTSIDE: Participants share information to describe themselves in ways that might be obvious upon meeting them. (i.e. race – for some, physical descriptions, style, etc.)
OPTIONAL: participants may include assumptions others make about them based first on outward impressions. This would require a commitment to more time for discussion and debriefing.
 - INSIDE: Participants use the inside of the bag to record or represent information to describe themselves in ways that are less obvious upon meeting them. (i.e. race – for some, ethnicity, home language, birthplace, family, values, political affiliation, religion, etc. – for some, physical descriptions, style, etc.) This information should include answers to the question, “What would you hope others would learn about you as they get to know you more personally?”
4. Participants introduce themselves using their Personal Appreciation Bags to share information about themselves – starting with the obvious and moving into that information that may be less obvious or even unknown, which the participants wish to share – and would hope others would know about them as they got to know them more personally.
5. After introductions, the entire group debriefs the activity. Beyond normal debriefing prompts (i.e. “How did you experience this activity?”) the facilitator may choose to debrief on a deeper level (i.e. “How did it feel to include more personal information? When is it that others usually get to learn the more personal information about you?” etc.)
6. Members hang their Personal Appreciation Bags around the room; they should remain hanging in the room for a set time (workshop days, orientation week, student retreat day, etc.) Throughout this time, participants are encouraged to build community by completing the enclosed notes to share appreciations as they get to know each other through their shared activities and experiences.
Facilitators should consider issues of equity and safety (i.e. popularity, alienation, etc.) and be expected to participate and coach others - when hearing appreciations – to capture the thought on a Post-It ®.
7. At the end of the established time, participants take their Personal Appreciation Bags with them to review the appreciations of others anytime they need a reminder or a boost! 😊