

The Response Thermometer

10:05 a.m. - 10:40 a.m.

A. Objectives

- To heighten self-awareness regarding personal bias
- To become more sensitive to issues of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and culture

B. Step One:

Sit in a circle with the poster "thermometer" in the center. Have one member of the group read each of the following scenarios. After each scenario, group members place one hand in the square that best represents what he/she would do if this scenario actually occurred.

Confront the person	Laugh
Pretend you didn't see/hear it	Talk to the person about his/her comment/actions

Scenarios

1. You and a friend are walking down one of the busier streets in town. However, it is late at night and no one is around. You notice that, as a group of young Latino males approach and proceed to pass the two of you, your friend clutches just a little tighter to her pocketbook.
2. You and your friends are at the outside basketball court in town where everyone convenes on a daily basis to play hoops. Today is just a little different though. Normally, dividing into two teams to play pick-up games is easy because faces are familiar. However, two newcomers, one Caucasian, the other Black, are present. Once the time has come to figure out which team each of the newcomers will be on, one guy in the group of "familiar" quickly motions the Black male over to the team for which he usually plays.
3. You are walking near two teachers in the hall. One of them is complaining about her fifth period class, which basically contains lower-tracked students. You hear her say, "I've given up on those kids. They're all from the same bad neighborhood, and if they and their parents don't care about their education, then why should I?"

4. You are one of several females who works out in your school's weight room after school. One afternoon, when you are using free weights, you politely ask one of the guys in the room if you can have the 25 lb. dumbbells when he is finished with them. As you walk away, you notice him first laughing, then making a face and comment to a nearby friend.
5. You are in a store at the mall with a diverse crowd of students from your school. Everyone is horsing around. The manager goes up to part of this crowd, consisting almost entirely of Black males, and tells them to get out because they are being disruptive.

C. Step Two:

Use an informal boundary-breaking approach in your follow-up discussion. One member reads a question and answers it. Then that question is open for discussion.

1. Which scenario had the greatest impact on you? Explain.
2. Describe a time when you were hurt by someone's words referring to your race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, or nationality.
3. Which stereotypes do people hold on to at your school that affect your school's climate?
4. Describe something about your ethnic or cultural background of which you are proud.
5. What can you do through the Peer Group Connection program to help students in your school to value their differences and discover what they have in common, perhaps lessening the problems associated with conflict?
6. What part of this exercise would you like to take back to your school and use in your program? How do you think students in your school will react to this exercise? How will you modify this activity?