



IMPROVING RACE RELATIONS

STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE FOR MANCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL

2000 - 2001 Academic Year

THE METROHARTFORD CONVERSATIONS ON RACE

*Adapted from material developed by
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SESSION 1 - Getting to Know You

OPENING

Facilitators will introduce themselves and briefly explain what the program is all about.

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER - 20 minutes

Pair up with someone and interview your partner. What is your name, where do you live and what year are you in school? Find out three other things about your partner that you can't tell just by appearance. Then switch.

When the whole group comes back together, the partners will introduce one other to the group.

EXPERIENCES WITH GROUP WORK - 10 minutes

What kinds of groups have you been a part of? Create a list as a group of experiences you've had in groups (teams, clubs, scouts, church groups, etc.). Think about good experiences you've had being part of a group. What made those experiences positive? What problems have you seen in the way groups function? Were you comfortable sharing in the last exercise? What would make you comfortable in this group?

ESTABLISHING GROUNDS RULES - 15 minutes

Your facilitators will help your group set ground rules. Ground rules help us create an environment where everyone feels free to speak openly and honestly. Use ROPES as a standard reference. Be sure to include issues of CONFIDENTIALITY and GOOD INTENTIONS).

The following is a sample list of ground rules. Have your group create its own list. The list should include rules that you will want to use for all six sessions, and must be agreed upon by all members of the group. Take consensus from group.

SAMPLE GROUND RULES:

1. Speak honestly. The most respectful thing we can do together is to be real.
2. No put-downs. Treat each other with respect, even if you disagree.
3. Speak briefly, so everyone has a chance to participate.
4. Only one person speaks at a time. Listen carefully to each other, without interruptions.
5. Stay on the topic at hand.
6. Use "I" statements. Speak only for yourself, rather than as a representative for any group. Remember the others are only speaking for themselves.
7. Confidentiality is important. Speak about what is happening, not who said it.
8. If something offends you, say so. Then tell the group how you were hurt or angry and why. We'll only grow and change if we share with each other.
9. The facilitators are not experts. They are here to help facilitate the process.
10. Remember that we are not enemies here. Everyone has come to the table to learn, grow, and share.

DOES RACE AND ETHNICITY AFFECT US? - 20 minutes

1. What is your racial or ethnic background? How does your background affect how you see yourself and how other people see you? How does it affect the way you treat other people-especially those who look different than you?
2. What have you been taught about race and racism-by parents, teachers, clergy, TV, and/or friends?
3. What do you think racism is?
4. What kind of problems or challenges do you face as a result of your race or ethnicity?
5. How do race and ethnicity affect relationships at school and in your neighborhood? What would you like to see change? Record a list and save.

CLOSING - 5 - 10 minutes

1. What have you heard today that has made you think, or has touched you in some way?
2. How did we do in honoring our ground rules? What else would you need to feel comfortable here?
3. Bring a picture of your family, and/or a story about them to the next session. The story can be about your family today or about something that happened in the past.

SESSION 2 - Family Roots

Choose an interactive exercise - 10 minutes

Opening: Family Stories - 15 minutes

1. Each of you were asked to bring a family photo and/or a family story. Take a few minutes each, to share your photo or story with the group.

-Then-

Noticing Differences - 15 minutes

2. Think back to a time in your life when you first noticed that people were different from you-maybe their skin was a different color, they dressed differently than you, or they spoke another language. What do you remember about that time?
Here are some things to help you try and remember:

- (a) What did the significant adults (your parents, grandparents, an aunt or uncle, or a teacher) do or say to help you understand these differences? Did they make a point to explain the differences to you?
- (b) Did their actions or comments help you to appreciate those differences or did they make you fearful of the other person?
- (c) How did these early experiences shape your understanding of race and racism?
- (d) What would you have liked the adults to do in that situation?
- (e) What would you say to a child if you were in the same situation as the adults?
- (f) What adult(s) can you talk to now about these issues?

TRUE COLORS VIDEO - 20 minutes
Show video and then discuss questions.

Discussion - 20 minutes

- What was the point of the video?
- Why do you think the two men had such different experiences?
- Could the same thing happen here? Explain.
- What stereotypes did you see or hear?

CLOSING - 5 - 10 minutes

1. What have you heard today that has made you stop and think, or has touched you in some way?

2. What would you like to tell someone who was not in today's group?

3. Interview a parent or family member. Ask them about their cultural background. What foods, holidays and traditions did they observe growing up? What do they like best about their cultural heritage?

SESSION 3 - Stereotypes

Choose an interactive exercise - 10 minutes

Opening: Family Interviews - 30 minutes

Take turns talking about your interviews with your parent or family member. What did you learn? What were they proud of in terms of their cultural heritage.

Stereotypes - 30 minutes

Stereotypes are images, beliefs, or assumptions about a group of people without taking into consideration a person's individual differences:

1. List three words that you would use to describe your racial ethnic group. List three stereotypes others would use to stereotype your group?
2. How do stereotypes get started?
3. How do stereotypes affect you in school, in your neighborhood, at a job, in stores, or with friends?
4. What are you being taught in school about your own group? Other groups?

CLOSING - 5 - 10 minutes

1. What have you heard today that made you stop and think, or has touched you in some way?
2. What is something new you learned about your culture or the culture of someone else in this group?
3. For the next session, bring in an article, ad, photo, headline or music lyrics related to the issues we are talking about (racism, race relations, stereotypes, etc.).
4. Identify the adults in your life to whom you can go or talk with about your cultural heritage or those of a different heritage.

SESSION 4 - Racial Tension

Choose an Interactive Exercise - 10 minutes

Facilitators: Bring cut outs from magazines, newspapers, etc.

Opening: Cultural Images - 25 minutes (depending on number of items)

Take turns talking about the article, ad, photo, headline or music lyrics and how it relates to stereotypes.

WHY DO WE HAVE RACIAL TENSION? - 45 minutes

Here are some different ideas:

Racism is everywhere in America. Racism is the belief that some people are better than others because of their skin color. The power structure in our country is built on the belief that this is a fact of life. Young people who exhibit racist attitudes are merely reflecting and becoming a part of the culture they're growing up in.

Racial tension is getting worse because some people of color portray white people as the "enemy". That kind of attitude inflames racial conflicts. Some people of color believe that all white people are racist and that's just not true! Although America has a history of being racist, and discriminatory-from slavery to Jim Crow laws-not all white people support those views and many have fought for civil rights.

Racial and ethnic tension comes from misunderstanding and fear about people who are different. Since people of different racial groups don't have many chances to get to know each other, it's easy to believe common stereotypes. Each person should be treated as an individual, not as just "another black person" or just "another Latino/a".

Racial tension is increasing because it's harder to get ahead. It's tough for anyone to "make it" in our system, but it's tougher still for people of color. Tensions and frustrations between groups are a natural consequence of this competition.

Racial and ethnic tension are getting worse because we have different policies and expectations for racial and ethnic minorities. Making special allowances for people of color, like affirmative action or bilingual education, only perpetuate the stereotypes that people of color are intellectually and professionally inferior. America is a nations of immigrants-no other minority or immigrant populations has ever been given special treatment and they made it just fine.

Of these opinions, is there one or more that you agree with? Are there any you disagree with? Are there any perspectives that have been left out?

BUILDING UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S EXPERIENCES (Optional)

A SPEAK OUT - 25 minutes

At this session, we want to take a little time to have people speak out about their racial and ethnic heritage. Your group may give every person a chance to answer the questions, or you may just have a few people speak while the rest of the group listens. It is important to remember the ground rules about listening without interruptions, and remembering that no person speaks for her or his entire group, but rather for themselves, from their own experiences.

The "Speak Out" questions are below. Each person who speaks should answer all questions, pertaining to their racial/ethnic identity, even if these experiences and thoughts are different from others. After the "Speak Out", your group can take some time to speak more about what they've heard.

1. What is great about being _____. Speak about positive experiences you've encountered.
2. What is hard about being _____. Speak about negative experiences you've encountered.
3. What do you never again want to hear others say about (people of your racial/ethnic identity)?

Closing - 5-10 minutes

1. What did you learn today that made you stop and think, or has touched you in some way?
2. What would you like to tell someone who was not in today's group?
3. Hand out "White Privilege" Reading Materials to prepare for next meeting.

SESSION 5 - The World I Live In

Choose an Interactive Exercise - 10 minutes

Interactive Consider other images, for example-age, size, height, neighborhood school, freshman vs senior, etc. and discuss how these differences affect our relationships with others.

DOES SKIN COLOR MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN HERE? - 30 minutes

Read the examples out loud. After each, stand or raise your hand if the statement is true for you. Then look around the room to see who is standing or sitting.

I can be sure that my school materials accurately show my people now and in history.

I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color, and have them more or less match my skin.

I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge", I will be facing a person who looks like me.

If a police officer stops me on the street, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my skin color.

I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people that look like me.

I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the newspaper and see people that look like me are widely represented, or represented in a positive way.

If dressed nicely, I can go shopping knowing that I will not be followed or harassed in the store.

Some or most of my teachers have the same skin color as I do.

WHITE PRIVILEGE - 40 minutes

Some people believe that in this society, people with lighter skin have unfair advantages or privileges over people whose skin is darker. These privileges are often invisible and people who benefit often do not see these privileges.

1. What do you think of the idea of white privilege? Explore definitions.
2. What have been your experiences with white privilege?

CLOSING - 5- 10 minutes

1. What have you heard today that has made you stop and think, or has touched you in some way?
2. What would you like to tell someone who was not in today's group?

SESSION 6 - Can You See What I See?

Opening: Intentional Segregation - 40 minutes

Facilitators-Have cards set up around the table designating sections for persons according to their racial/ethnic background. For example, have a section for Asians, Latinos, African Americans, European Americans, and Native Americans, etc. The cards will represent the different groups in your circle. When the participants come in, have them sit in their sections.

1. Did you notice the segregation?
2. Did it feel normal or abnormal?
3. How did you react to being separated?
4. Did you protest the segregation? Why or why not?
5. What would you do if you saw something like this happening today?
6. If you are not forced to be segregated like this exercise, why do people still segregate themselves in the lunchroom?
7. How do you handle situations where you feel empowered vs a victim.

REDUCING TENSION - 40 minutes

How can we reduce tension and improve relations between racial and ethnic groups? Here are five possible ways to address this problem:

Viewpoint #1 - We need to confront racism head-on. We need to examine our personal attitudes, change them, and move beyond them. Every person should take part in anti-racism and prejudice reduction programs.

To confront societal racism, sometime we need to give extra privileges to members of groups that have been the victims of racism.

Viewpoint #2 - We should work together on common projects. When people of different racial groups work together on community projects, they make friends and racial tensions begin to disappear. Religious groups, school clubs, team sports, and community service projects can offer the change to have one-one-one relations with people of different races.

Viewpoint #3 - We should treat everyone the same regardless of race. In our attitudes, we should always look at the content of person's character, not the color of their skin. In our policies we shouldn't give certain groups special privileges. To be fair, the rules should be the same for everybody. When some groups have special privileges, it creates resentment and even more problems.

Viewpoint #4 - People of all ages and races need to work together on racial problems. The education of young people is important, but it will never be enough. Adults have to be a part of the discussion of racism and racial tensions, and be willing to make changes, too.

Viewpoint #5 - We need more changes to learn about each other. Stereotypes break down when young people become knowledgeable about different cultures and traditions. Community, religious, or school events which celebrate different cultures can promote trust, understanding and friendship.

Discussion Questions

1. Take turns reading the viewpoints aloud. Which viewpoint sounds right to you? Why? Has anything been left out?
2. How has your experience affected your feelings about this issue?
3. How do you think others in your life feel about these viewpoints?

CLOSING - 5 -10 minutes

1. What have you heard today that has made you stop and think, or has touched you in some way?

2. What would you like to tell someone who was not here about today's group?

SESSION 7 - I am My Brother's/Sister's Keeper

Choose an Interactive Exercise - 10 minutes

ALLIES - 65 minutes

Facilitator should read introduction out loud:

Lets talk about this: You walk into the cafeteria and notice that the only available seat is at a table that is occupied by students from a different background. You go to sit down, when one of the students tells you that only kids from his background can sit there. You begin to turn around, when someone else at the table tells the group that everyone should be allowed to sit there, and they should try to get to know you. That person is acting as an ally.

Here is another example: your teacher, who is from a different background than you, says something wrong about your group. You want to say something, but are either afraid or tired of always having to speak up. Another student in the class, someone not from your background also heard the statement and spoke up to say that the teacher had said something wrong. That person is acting as an ally.

1. When was a time you could have used an ally? How did you feel?
2. When was a time you were someone's ally?
3. How did it make you feel to be an ally?
4. When was a time you probably should have become someone's ally, but didn't? What gets in the way of being an ally?
5. What can we do to encourage others to be better allies?

SESSION 8 - Future Wave

Choose an Interactive Exercise - 10 minutes

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF..... - 45 minutes

1. Your uncle makes a racist comment?
2. Your parents keep talking about racial equality, but don't want you to date a person of another race?
3. Your friend says something that you think is racist in front of a person of that race?
4. Someone at our school paints a racist word in the bathroom?
5. A teacher who likes you, says something racist in class? You know if you challenge it, the teacher might not like you anymore.

NEW SCHOOL - 30 minutes

Imagine you are on a committee creating a new school that will have no racism in it, but there will be many different kinds of people. Starting from scratch:

1. What would it look like?
2. What would you do to prevent racism from starting?
3. What would you do to prevent the problems that you have discussed so far in the dialogue, like interracial dating or stereotyping?
4. What would you do, as the leaders of the school to make sure there was racial justice and equality?
5. Is there anything else you would include?

SESSION 9 - Where Do We Go From Here?

Choose an Interactive Exercise - 10 minutes

CREATING CHANGE - 30 minutes

1. Pull out the list generated in **Session #1** about problems that you face? Are there any others you would like to add?
2. Go through the list together. Is there an issue that you would like to work on as a group?
3. What is being done at your school or in your community to address problems between groups? What has worked? What's not working? Why?
4. What can we do to reduce conflict between groups? Who else needs to be involved?
5. Make a list of what you want leaders in your community (school officials, student leaders, RA's, etc.) to do about racism and race relations. What will you do with this list?

WHERE DOES OUR GROUP GO FROM HERE? - 20 minutes

Many Conversations Groups have decided to stay together as a group. Several have continued meeting weekly to dialogue on the issues they did not have time to cover. Others are meeting on new schedules to continue to build the relationships.

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR GROUP'S FUTURE:

- Become a youth facilitator.
- Continue group meetings during study hall period.
- Start a telephone and address tree, and call one another for support on ending racism.
- Take an action together, like getting anti-racism training into the curriculum.
 1. If you do want to continue, make plans for your next meeting, deciding how often you wish to meet, where and the purpose for the meeting.
 2. What is the role of your facilitators should you continue? Should someone else lead the next couple of meetings?
 3. How about a web site at the school?
 4. Develop a resource list with opportunities for community services, volunteerism, etc.

CLOSING EXERCISE - 15 minutes

Go around the room, giving each person a chance to make an individual commitment to change (example: changing a behavior, making a commitment to stay in touch with each other, trying to learn more etc.). Name one thing you will do as a result of being a part of this group.

Evaluations - 5 minutes