

SESSION I—WHAT MAKES US SPECIAL?

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

This session will provide an opportunity for children to begin to look at the myriad of things that make cultures, races, or people in general special. It also will serve as a way for the children to become acquainted with each other and to understand the purpose for the group.

GOALS

1. To help children understand their reasons for involvement in the group.
2. To encourage children to begin to make connections with other members of the group.
3. To present group ground rules.
4. To provide an opportunity for children to begin to accept and appreciate differences in others.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. 12" × 18" sheet of paper for each child
2. Chart paper or chalkboard
3. Markers and crayons or chalk

PROCEDURE

1. Introduce yourself and have each of the group members introduce himself or herself by first name. Talk about the fact that this is a group where we will begin to identify, understand, accept, and appreciate differences in others.
2. Begin to set the stage for the group by inviting a brainstorming session on group rules. (Write the rules on chart paper or on the chalkboard and post them for future reference.) Examples of possible initial group ground rules may include the following:
 - a What is said in the group, stays there (confidentiality).
 - b No put-downs are allowed.
 - c Only one person talks at a time.
 - d It is important to attend all sessions.

Note: If children do not suggest these group rules, you as facilitator should bring them up as part of the brainstorming session.

3. Give each child a piece of drawing paper and crayons or markers to draw a picture of "something beautiful." (The facilitator should also draw a picture.)

4. When all children have drawn their pictures, ask them to pair up with a partner and discuss their picture. Encourage them to identify any similarities and differences in what they see as being "something beautiful."

5. Bring the pairs back into one large group and encourage each child to share a picture with the whole group. (If possible, place the pictures on a wall or bulletin board where all of them are visible at one time for comparison and contrast.)

6. Point out that the old saying "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" certainly applies here as group members have all identified "beauty" in their own way.

7. Relate this to differences in people as well by asking what makes each of them "beautiful." Ask them to think about some of the things that keep us from appreciating the "beauty" in others (e.g., racial and cultural stereotypes, lack of understanding, fear, etc.). You may need to explain the word "stereotype."

8. Complete the session by having the group members talk about what qualities of the group make them special. (Because this group is, hopefully, of diverse backgrounds, some of these qualities may be mentioned.) Remind them that, during the next eight weeks, we will be learning to accept and appreciate the differences in others.

CLOSURE

To conclude this initial session, congratulate the children for following the ground rules and remind them that they have begun to identify some of the things that make this a unique group. We will continue to develop that understanding in our future sessions.

HOMEWORK

For a homework assignment, ask each child to get their parents to help them identify at least one cultural stereotype they have heard.

SESSION II—STEREOTYPES

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

In this session, children will have an opportunity to look at their own personal stereotypes as well as become aware of many common stereotypes that are held by people. They will also begin to discuss how each of us can do our part to try to eliminate stereotyping.

GOALS

1. To help children identify common stereotypes that many people currently hold.
2. To encourage children to evaluate their own personal stereotypes.
3. To discuss ways to overcome stereotyping behavior.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. A variety of pictures for display (e.g., an elderly person, a business or professional person, an athlete, a punk rocker, a clergy person, a small child, etc.)
2. Chart paper (at least 3 pieces)
3. Markers

PROCEDURE

1. Begin by directing children's attention to the pictures that you have placed around the room. Tell them that you are going to ask them some questions about these people and they will see how they view each of the persons. We will show our choices by voting for the person we feel fits the description.

2. Ask the following questions (and provide time for voting and discussion after each question):

- a Which one is the richest?
- b Which one is the friendliest?
- c Which one would you be afraid of?
- d Which one has the most friends?
- e Which one likes rock music?
- f Which one is the most successful?
- g Which one is the most religious?

3. Following the discussion, ask the children to think about their choice. Why did they choose as they did? Are there some of the stereotypes we hold?

4. Divide the children into small groups and have them list some of the other stereotypes we hold about specific cultures or races. Remind them that this was part of their homework assignment so they should be able to quickly identify many common stereotypes. Some of the following are examples of stereotypes that some people hold:

- a African-Americans are good athletes.
- b African-Americans are lazy.
- c Jewish people are stingy.
- d Irish people are all drinkers.
- f Asians are smart.
- g Italians are gangsters.

5. Ask the children to identify some of the stereotypes that they refute. Talk about the fact that we should get to know people rather than stereotyping them.

6. Talk about some ways to get to know people better. Ask the children for suggestions.

CLOSURE

Bring closure to this session by reminding the children that the purpose of this group is to help us understand and appreciate diversity. We can do this by resisting stereotyping behavior and getting to know people before judging them.

HOMEWORK

For homework, each child should make a concerted effort to get to know someone who is different from him or her during the next week.

SESSION III—DIVERSITY IN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CAPACITY

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

In this session, children will begin to identify things other than culture that make us different. We will consider differences in physical and mental abilities and how they, too, can make people seem "different."

GOALS

1. To encourage children to identify differences other than culture that can be found in our school or community.
2. To assist children in beginning to identify ways in which they can promote better communication among all people.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Pictures of handicapped children
2. A braille book
3. Sign alphabet cards
4. If possible, a visitor from the local Easter Seal Society to talk with the children about handicaps

PROCEDURE

1. Begin by asking the children to share with the group their experiences from their "homework" assignment. What were some of the positives of their experience? Allow brief time for discussion from each group member.
2. Ask if any of the children had the opportunity to get to know someone who was different in a way other than culturally?
3. Discuss some other "differences" we encounter each day. Provide time for brainstorming the following differences:
 - a handicaps,
 - differences in school abilities,
 - differences in athletic abilities, and
 - differences in beliefs.

4. Show the braille book, the signing alphabet, and pictures of handicapped children. Provide time for discussion of familiarity with any of these.

5. Introduce the resource person from Easter Seal and allow time for him or her to talk with the children. Be sure to save time for the children to ask questions.

6. Encourage discussion of how these children can develop a friendship with a child who is a client of the Easter Seal Society. What are some things you could do with a special needs child? (You may want to talk about volunteerism at this point. Such groups as Easter Seal and Special Olympics always are looking for willing volunteers.)

CLOSURE

Bring closure to this session by providing a little "thinking time" for each group member. Ask the children to discuss their feelings about today's discussion.

HOMEWORK

For homework, each child is to spend some time thinking about what it might be like to be blind, deaf, or confined to a wheelchair. Encourage group members to write down their thoughts on a piece of paper and bring it to the next group session.

SESSION IV—WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

During the course of this session, the children will have an opportunity to actually experience what it would be like to be blind, deaf, on crutches, or in a wheelchair. This will provide an experience in sensitivity to the challenges of others.

GOALS

1. To provide an opportunity for the children to experience life with a "temporary" disability.
2. To encourage the children to discuss their experience in light of what it would be like to have such a disability on a "permanent" basis.
3. To continue to provide opportunity to understand and appreciate diversity in people.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Wheelchair
2. Crutches
3. Earplugs
4. Slips of paper with the words "blind," "deaf," "on crutches," and "in a wheelchair" written on them

Note: There should be enough so that each group member has the opportunity to experience a "temporary disability."

PROCEDURE

1. Take a few moments for the children to share their homework assignment with the other group members. Allow a few moments for discussion and reactions from group members.
2. Tell the children that today they are going to have an opportunity to "walk in the shoes" of a disabled person during this group session.
3. Have each child draw the slip of paper that describes a disability. Take a few minutes to have children get the proper equipment for their disabilities. Then describe the tasks that they need to complete while they are "disabled":

- a Blind—write your name; fill a cup with water from a pitcher.
- b Deaf—make a telephone call; ask directions to the local mall.
- c On crutches—Climb stairs (be sure to have a spotter for safety); make a telephone call.
- d In a wheelchair—negotiate an uneven surface; go outside and up a ramp (again with a spotter).

4. Provide about 15 minutes for the children to "experience" their disability and complete their tasks.
5. Bring the group back together and allow time for discussion of the difficulties they experienced in attempting to complete their tasks.
 - a What was hardest for you?
 - b Did you ask for help (or did you want to)?
 - c What would it be like to have this disability on a permanent rather than temporary basis?
 - d What can you do to make life more pleasant for those who have these disabilities?

CLOSURE

Because this is a pretty emotional session and there are a lot of feelings about the experience, provide time for the children to discuss their feelings. End this session on a quiet note.

HOMEWORK

In order to go in a different direction next session, encourage the children to think about and begin to collect information on some celebrations different from those that they are familiar with. Next session, we will spend a bit of time talking about the winter celebrations of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza.

SESSION V—DIVERSITY IN CELEBRATIONS

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

In this session, children will have an opportunity to learn more about ways others celebrate their beliefs. Three specific celebrations have been chosen—Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa—but the facilitator may want to use others depending upon the resources and variety available in his or her area (e.g., Native American Celebrations, Asian Celebrations, Hindu Celebrations).

GOALS

1. To assist children in learning about belief celebrations different from their own.
2. To encourage understanding and appreciation of a variety of beliefs.
3. To involve the community in promoting celebration of diversity.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. People resources—a Christian, a Jewish person, and an African-American who celebrates Kwanzaa—to discuss their celebrations with the children and answer questions
2. Materials that can be used to demonstrate the three celebrations (e.g. Menorah, Christmas tree, Kwanzaa celebration garb, etc.)
3. Copies of “To Thank You” worksheet (Activity Sheet 14.1)

PROCEDURE

1. Ask the children if they were able to gather information about any of the three celebration topics mentioned as last session’s homework assignment. Provide a few minutes to allow for discussion and sharing of information.
2. Introduce the resource persons and provide time for them to give a brief overview and demonstration of their particular celebration. Build in time for children to ask questions. (Keep in mind that they probably will have the most questions about the celebrations they are least familiar with.)
3. Encourage the children to discuss the things they learned from this session and to compare how the celebration they are most familiar with is similar and different from the other two. This discussion could be in diads or triads if the facilitator wishes.

4. Suggest that the children each write a letter to one of the three resource persons to show their appreciation to that person for coming to the group to talk about their celebration. Make sure the letters are divided equally so that each presenter receives at least two letters. Provide a “To Thank You” worksheet (Activity Sheet 14.1) for each child in the group.

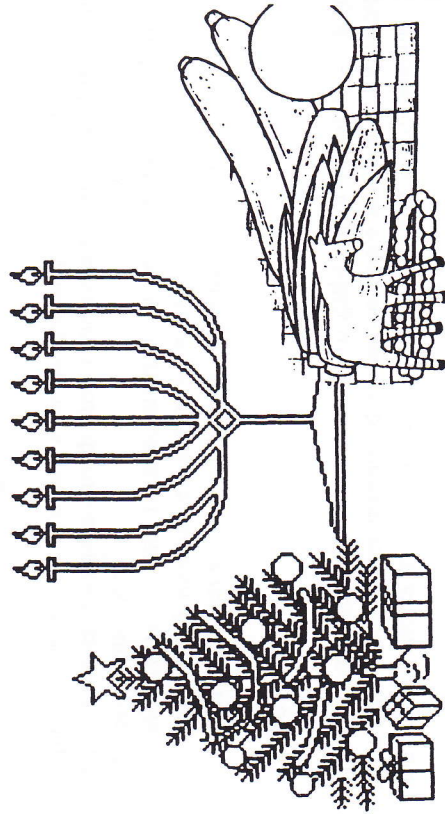
CLOSURE

Remind the children of the new learnings they have gained as a result of today’s session. Suggest that they take some time this evening at home to share some of this information with their family.

HOMEWORK

In preparation for next session, ask each child to enlist the assistance of his or her parents in preparing some type of food that is typical of his or her culture. These foods will be sampled by the group at the next session. Children should also be ready to tell the group about the food and how it came to be an important staple of their culture or ethnic background.

TO THANK YOU



Activity Sheet 14.1. To Thank You worksheet. Permission is granted to enlarge and photocopy for classroom use.

SESSION VI—A DIVERSITY FEAST

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

In this session, the children will begin to have a very personal view of ethnic and cultural differences in regard to food choices. Each child will bring a sample of an ethnic food that is a custom of his or her culture. The group then will have a feast of ethnic foods.

GOALS

1. To assist children in gaining a greater understanding of ethnic and cultural differences in food.
2. To encourage children to taste each of the various foods in the feast.
3. To further promote appreciation and understanding of all people.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Ethnic foods prepared by each child's family
2. Recipe sheet (Activity Sheet 14.2 is an example.)
3. Eating utensils (paper plates, napkins, cups, knives, forks, spoons)
4. Table and tablecloth

PROCEDURE

1. Talk briefly with the children about last week's session on celebrations. Allow for discussion of family reactions and so forth.
2. Remind the children that, in today's session, we are going to actually have our own mini-celebration of our heritage by sharing foods of our culture with the others in the group.
3. Provide a few minutes for each group member to tell the others about the food he or she brought to share. Place all foods on the table in an attractive manner.
4. Pass out plates, napkins, and plastic utensils and encourage each child to taste each of the foods that have been shared. (Allow time for seconds if they wish to resample any of the items, and try to make the sharing a social event with friendly conversation among the group members.)

- 5. Allow time for some discussion of the foods.
 - a How were they different?
 - b What did you like about them?
 - c Which was your favorite?
 - d Were you hesitant to try any of the foods?
- 6. Talk about the fact that ethnic restaurants are very popular in the United States today and that many people are learning to appreciate foods of other cultures.

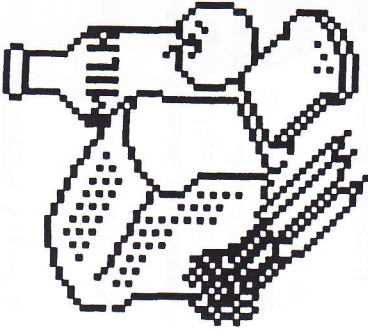
CLOSURE

Bring this session to a close by allowing the children to talk about their feelings about this session. How did you feel about bringing your own food? How did you feel about tasting the food of others?

HOMEWORK

Give each child a recipe sheet (Activity Sheet 14.2) take home and ask a parent to copy down the recipe for the food item brought to share with the group. We will use the recipe sheets to make a small "Diversity Feast Cookbook" for them to have as a keepsake.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY THROUGH FOOD !!



Recipe Name _____

Ingredients:

Directions:

History of the Recipe:

EXAMPLE: Handed down from my grandmother who came to Pennsylvania as a baby in 1904. It is a holiday favorite in Hungary, particularly at Easter.

Your Name _____

Activity Sheet 14.2. Recipe sheet. Permission is granted to enlarge and photocopy for classroom use.

SESSION VII—LET'S CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

In this session, children will have an opportunity to work together to create a mural or collage to show their understanding and appreciation of the value of all people.

GOALS

1. To provide an opportunity for the children to work together to develop a "Celebrate Diversity" collage or mural.
2. To further encourage getting to know and appreciate the value to others.
3. To take the material from their homework assignment and develop a small ethnic cookbook.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Mural paper
2. Old magazines
3. Scissors
4. Glue or paste
5. Paints or markers

PROCEDURE

1. Talk briefly with the children about their homework assignment. Collect the recipes so that they can be duplicated and assembled into a small cookbook for children to keep as a remembrance of the group.
2. Spend a few minutes talking about the value of all people in creating the world in which we live. Encourage discussion of the things that make everyone a special part of our life.
3. Explain to the children that today's session is going to be spent in the development of a mural that will attempt to show others the kinds of things we have been talking about in group. Generate ideas as to how the mural should be made, what it should contain, and so forth.
4. Discuss an appropriate title for the mural. Some possibilities include

We are Different—We are the Same,
Living in Harmony,
Everyone is Special, and
Appreciate the Contribution of All.

5. Provide time for the children to work together to create their mural. Remind them that it can be drawn, painted, done in the form of a collage, or a combination of all of the above. The important thing is that we get the message we have learned out to others and that the children work together as a group to add each person's special talent to the creation of the mural.

6. When the mural is completed, hang it in a place where it can be seen by many persons. Stress to the children that appreciating and understanding diversity can help us have a better and more peaceful world.

CLOSURE

Bring closure to this session by again encouraging children to talk about their feelings. How did you feel when you were doing the mural? Do you think you can help others to appreciate diversity? How would you do it?

HOMEWORK

As a homework assignment, ask the children to think about how they can utilize the information they have learned in this group to create a more peaceful community (e.g., school, world). Give each child a 3" × 5" card to write three possible solutions to achieve this goal.

SESSION VIII—CREATING A MORE PEACEFUL WORLD

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSION

In this final group session, children will have the opportunity to develop a list of suggestions for creating a more peaceful world. They will develop a "Declaration of Peace," that can be shared with others in the home, school, or community. They will realize that the old adage "peace begins with me" can, indeed, become a reality.

GOALS

1. To encourage children to reiterate the need for accepting, understanding, and valuing all persons.
2. To continue building on the understanding that human differences make people unique and special.
3. To assist the children in identifying and describing the qualities of peacemakers.
4. To assist the children in collaboratively creating a "Declaration of Peace."
5. To bring closure to the group and to complete a group evaluation.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Copies of "Declaration of Peace" worksheet (Activity Sheet 14.3)
2. Brief stories of peacemakers to share with the group
3. Group evaluation for each child
4. Pencils and markers
5. Copies of "Diversity Feast Cookbook" for all

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute the "Diversity Feast Cookbook" and encourage the children to take them home and share with their families.
2. Briefly talk about their impressions as to who are some people who have made attempts to be peacemakers in our world. Some names that may come to mind include

Abraham Lincoln,
Martin Luther King,
Mother Theresa, and
Ghandi.

3. Discuss these briefly with the children and ask them what makes these people special peacemakers.

4. Provide time for children to share their homework suggestions for creating a more peaceful world. List these on one large sheet of poster paper as possibilities for creating a "Declaration of Peace."

5. Begin to work together as a group (or divide the children into groups of two) to identify three or four statements that can be used as a "Declaration of Peace." A sample of some possible statements could be

We believe that human beings are different in many ways, and that our differences make us unique and special. We also believe that we are all interconnected regardless of our differences and we need to affirm and appreciate others for their uniqueness. When we accept ourselves and others, we can create a more peaceful world.

6. Have each child copy the final statement on a "Declaration of Peace" worksheet (Activity Sheet 14.3) and share it with his or her family.

7. Encourage discussion of final statement and talk about how these children can work together to make the world a more peaceful place.

CLOSURE

Conclude this session by having each child tell every other group member something that is special or unique about himself or herself and why he or she was a special group member. Pass out the group evaluations and provide time for completion.

HOMEWORK

The homework assignment for this group is to take the appreciation and understanding of others that they have learned and share it with everyone they meet. Encourage the children to start now to make their classroom, community, and world a place where everyone is valued and appreciated.