

**Title:** Welcoming a Stranger

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**Audience:** Ethnic Organization Leaders

**Learning Outcome(s):**

1. Students will be able to make a stranger comfortable and welcome in a group situation.

**Curriculum Standards:**

- Leadership for Social Change Diversity Model
  - Individual/Identity Development
    - Consciousness of Self
    - Congruence
    - Commitment
  - Group Development
    - Collaboration
    - Common Purpose
    - Civil Controversy
  - Community Development
    - Citizenship

**Guiding Question(s):**

1. What behaviors or methods are effective for welcoming a stranger.

**Assessment Strategy:**

- Lesson Debriefing
  - To what degree are participants able to distinguish between potentially welcoming and unwelcoming behaviors?
- Program Development
  - To what degree are participants able to apply this information when planning to welcome new students?

### Assessment Rubric:

Outcome	Poor	Basic	Competent	Accomplished
1	Students demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to the experience of being new to a group.	Student behaviors and comments, though sensitive, focused solely on their own experiences of being new to a group and trivialized how the experiences of others may be different.	Students demonstrated an awareness of and sensitivity toward the diverse experiences of students who are new to a group, but failed to translate this awareness into action.	Students demonstrated awareness of and sensitivity toward the stranger experience, and developed appropriate strategies to welcome first-year students to campus.

### Necessary Materials:

- Two spaces are required—one group of students will need to be separated for a time period, out of ear/eye-shot.
- A board/newsprint and markers are nice for debriefing, but not necessary.

### Learning Connections:

- Take special notice of students who are highly introverted and/or extroverted.
- Handouts addressing specific welcoming behaviors will be helpful for some students.

### Learning Activities/Teaching Strategies:

#### Lesson Outline

1. Review the skills covered in previous lessons (questioning, active listening, non-verbal communication), talking about how they are related and how the group will be given a chance to apply these skills in the lesson for today.
2. Appoint two student observers. These students will not participate in the activity, but take notes on their observations and report back to the group at the end.
3. Introduction
  - a. How many of you have ever been a stranger in a group? Moved into a new town or neighborhood? Joined a new club or organization?
  - b. What happened to you? What did people do? How did you feel?
  - c. What was particularly good about the experience? What was particularly bad?
  - d. Based on the examples members have just shared, what seem to be methods to help a new person feel comfortable in a group?

#### 4. Simulated Experience Directions

- a. Most peer counselors find that in planning to meet a counselee for the first time, they plan what they will do and say. Often, the other person does not react or respond the way the peer counselor anticipated. Sometimes this makes them so nervous, they do not handle this meeting well.
- b. Sometimes we also find that we behave quite differently when we are in a group compared with when we are by ourselves or with only one other person. We find ourselves going along with a group need, or saying or doing things because of group pressure.
- c. To help you understand these situations and to increase your understanding of how to help another person, both individually and in a group, we are going to practice welcoming a stranger into the group.
- d. Listen carefully to the following directions:
  - i. I will divide you into groups of about 5 in number.
  - ii. As a group you are to select someone to be the stranger. No one can volunteer. You can use any method you want for choosing the stranger.
  - iii. The stranger is to leave the room. When gone, the group decides the setting for the group. Is it a club? A neighborhood? A classroom? What role is the stranger to play in this simulation?
  - iv. Once decided, plan what you will do as a group to welcome the stranger. When your strategy is planned, someone from the group goes out and brings the stranger in, telling her/him what role she/he is to play.
  - v. Proceed to enact the simulation. I will tell you when to stop.
  - vi. Are there any questions as to what you are to do?

#### 5. Simulation Experience

- a. The time allotted for this activity should be sufficient so that each group has had at least 10 minutes to enact the situation. Some groups will make their plans more quickly and therefore will have more time. Wait until all groups have had at least ten minutes.

#### 6. Debriefing

- a. First, questions for the strangers:
  - i. How were each of you chosen? How did each feel about the method used?
  - ii. How did you feel when you were standing outside, waiting to be called in?
  - iii. What specific things did the group do to make you feel welcome?
  - iv. What specific things did the group do to make you feel nervous, uncomfortable, or not welcome?
  - v. How did you feel about the experience?

- b. Second, questions for the groups:
  - i. What plans had you made for welcoming your stranger?
  - ii. What did the group do or the stranger do that affected individual behavior in the group?
  - iii. What things did you do that might be interpreted as an initiation, rather than a welcoming?
  - iv. What did you learn from this activity?
- c. Third, questions for everyone (potentially in groups):
  - i. [Consciousness, Commitment, Congruence] How well aware were you of your own behaviors during the exercise? On the other hand, to what degree were you not yourself, just someone playing a role? Consider applications for orientation week and the first several weeks of school.
  - ii. [Collaboration, Common Purpose, Civil Controversy] How well did you work with others in your group? For those of you in the welcoming groups, how well did you follow your plan? How did you handle disagreements, or behaviors that strayed from your plan? Consider applications for orientation week and the first several weeks of school.
  - iii. [Citizenship] How does your behavior reflect your ethnic organization? People of your race/ethnicity? Concordia? How do you want new students to feel about your organization, ethnicity, and Concordia? Consider applications for orientation week and the first several weeks of school.

#### 7. Points to be Made from the Discussion

NOTE: If you divide into groups for 6.c., be sure to address these points before breaking into groups.

- a. Even though each group used a random method for choosing the stranger, does that always eliminate the feeling of being rejected? Sometimes people feel they always come up losers.
- b. Do past successful or unsuccessful experiences help to fortify one when finding oneself a stranger? Why?
- c. Was the setting more apt to be a friendly one, or a more hostile one for the stranger? How did either happen?
- d. Point out the things that were unconsciously done that made the stranger feel more uncomfortable. A frequent experience is an interrogation, where each person takes a turn asking the stranger another question. Was there a chair for the stranger? Did the group share anything about itself? Did one or two people do all or most of the talking?
- e. What are things one individual could do within a group to turn an unfriendly group into a warm, accepting group?
- f. Sometimes when people are rejected, forced to be strangers, they form their own group and refuse to join the other group again, or become

actively hostile to the original group. Think about this in terms of counselees you might work with.

8. Have the two student observers give a report of their experience and observations.
9. Provide a handout to all participants for them to consider quietly, by themselves. Include the following:
  - a. How have I behaved in a group when a stranger came in?
  - b. What keeps me from going out of my way to make a stranger feel welcome?
  - c. Have I deliberately ever made a stranger feel unwelcome?
  - d. What does it take to have the courage to speak out against a crowd?
  - e. What might be difficult for my group in doing this session?

#### Notes to Leaders

1. If there is any evidence of unkind behaviors experienced during the simulation, review again the opening comments and/or a list of welcoming behaviors. Ask members to demonstrate using them. Consider repeating the exercise. Note that some individuals may feel hurt by this exercise—be sensitive to any feelings of this kind.
2. Perhaps when attention is called to something done that seemed unfriendly, the individual responsible may respond that she/he was only playing a role. Remind this person that the group was not asked to play a role. Ask her/him to think about why she/he chose to behave this way.
3. Have the group reflect on where they have learned unkind behaviors and to examine the power of negative pressure in a group setting.
4. If a group is slow in selecting a stranger, or in planning a strategy, give this group your assistance.

#### **Evaluation:**

1. Include items addressing this exercise in the summative survey for the entire leadership retreat.
2. Conduct a focus group after orientation with staff and key student leaders about welcoming activities during orientation and the first 2-3 weeks of school.