

Objective

Teach students to properly listen to one another when tensions may be high during a conversation involving controversial topics

Risk Level: Intermediate - Advanced

Cautions: Topics that are to be discussed are somewhat controversial so the facilitator should be aware of how to properly moderate the activity.

Description: Students will be asked to defend a topic that they are assigned from another group that is given the opposite stance to defend. Groups will take turns listening, debating, and engaging in both positions given.

SCM: Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, Consciousness of Self

Time: 30-60 Minutes

Materials: Three Roads to Resolution Activity Sheet, Coins for “Buy In” Round

Preparation: Review of the activity, understanding of the topics that will be debated, an understanding of the debrief that follows the activity

Instructions

1. The facilitator will explain that in this activity they will get a chance to practice several ways of approaching a difference.
2. The facilitator then divide the group of students into two teams and will ask them to count off in two's to do so.
3. Once the group is divided, the facilitator will explain that one group is going to be “for” lowering the drinking age to 18, and the other group is going to be “against” lowering the drinking age to 18 and that the teams will move through three different rounds of debate
4. The Rules for the Rounds of debate are attached on the next sheet and should be read and followed to guide the activity before moving to step 5
5. Facilitate the debrief of this activity with the attached questions to this activity sheet

Follow Up: Facilitate the following questions:

- What did you notice that was different among the different approaches?
- What is it about the debate format that makes it difficult for people to come to an agreement?
- What happened when you had to pay to make a point?
- Are there other times when you feel hesitant to speak up? What does that do to a conversation?
- What happens when you have to listen carefully enough to be able to paraphrase and check in?
- What happens when you are forced to find common ground?
- What did it feel like to have to find the common purpose in a group with multiple perspectives?
- What strategies worked to achieving this?
- Why is controversy with civility an important leadership value?

Instructions, Cont.

Round One: In the first round, students are going to engage in a traditional debate. Each team will have two minutes to give opening remarks, two minutes to give a rebuttal, and that two minutes will be left for questions and answers. S/he will give each group five minutes to prepare their main ideas and logic to back them up.

When the five minutes is up, the facilitator will set up the debate by reviewing the debate schedule again. (You should not try to play peacemaker during this time). The debate usually becomes an argument by the time the groups reach the question and answer time.

Round Two: In the second round, students are going to use a method called “buying a point.” The facilitator will tell the two groups that they will continue to support the point of view s/he assigned them for the rest of the exercise. S/he will explain that they will not be able to talk in support of the topic for ten minutes without the structure of the debate. However, the facilitator will note that for this discussion, they will need to make careful choices about what to say and when to say it. The facilitator will pass out two pennies to each participant.

Once each participant has two pennies, the facilitator will tell them that they will have to spend a penny in order to make a point. S/he will note that as the discussion goes forward, they will need to choose the points they want to make very carefully. Each time a student makes a point, they will have to give up one penny. The facilitator will emphasize that once someone spends both of their pennies, they will no longer be able to make a point in the discussion. Start the discussion. When time is up, the facilitator will ask people to hold up either one or two fingers to show how many pennies they have left. S/he will tell the group that we will talk about what happened in the debate and buy a point conversation later.

Round Three: In the third and final round, students will use active listening skills to carefully listen to what the other person has to say and then restate what they have heard prior to making their point. The students for this method include:

1. **Listen.** You will be repeating back what you are hearing the other person say, so it is very important that you listen well. Try to notice their key points and also how he or she feels about them.
2. **Paraphrase.** When the other person has finished, you will paraphrase what you have just heard. You won't be reciting it back word for word. You will cover key points and give your impression about how the other person is feeling as well.
3. **Check in.** When you have finished your paraphrase, you will check in with the other person to be sure you were accurate. This is as simple as asking, “Did I get it right?” If they correct your paraphrase, redo those parts, and check in again.
4. **One point of agreement.** Highlight one point on which you agree with the other person.
5. **Make your point.** Now – after listening, paraphrasing, checking in, and finding common ground – you finally get to make your point.
6. **Listen.** The last step is for you to listen again. This time you need to listen well while the other person paraphrases your point. Pay attention, because he or she will be checking in to be sure that the paraphrase is correct.

Once everyone is clear on the process, the facilitator will pick someone who was making a strong point at the end of the last conversation to start the conversation this time.

Assessment

Questions: How does this activity relate to the highlighted theme?

How does this relate to your life?

Activity Specific: What leadership skills are vital to make the most of controversy?

Instructions

Lead students in a dialogue using the assessment questions provided. Track your feedback as an assessment tool for your work, the toolbox, and leadership initiatives within the division.

Please consider sharing some of the feedback with the Standing Committee for Student Leadership Development.

Notes:

