

VALUES IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

GOALS:

- To become aware of our own values and where they come from.
- To look at societal values and how they impact on our personal values.

RATIONALE:

We often experience a confrontation between our values and the values of people from other cultures. This is confusing to us. Sometimes we hurt ourselves and others unwittingly because of our assumptions about acceptable behaviour.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, paper, pens, a copy of *Identifying the Value* for each participant.

METHOD:

Warm up: Objects of Value

Ask participants to choose three things of value from their purse, pocket or briefcase. In dyads, tell participants to discuss the following:

- Why are these items of value to you?
- Which one would you give up if you had to? Why?

Exercise 1: Three Personal Values

Ask participants to write down three personal values that they feel are important to them. Flipchart a list of these personal values and put them up on the wall.

Divide the large group into small groups. Give each group three of the values to discuss.

Questions to consider:

- Where does this value come from?
- What assumptions do we make based on these values?
- Do you think these values are as important in other cultures as in your own?

Exercise 2: Identifying the Value

Give each group a copy of *Identifying the Value* worksheet. Instruct groups to identify the value or values and be prepared to share them with the total group.

Exercise 3: Moral Maxims

Ask the group to think of messages or sayings that they grew up with. These can be called moral maxims. Record these on the flipchart. Below are a few examples from different ethnic groups:

It is hard to pay for bread that has been eaten (Danish)

Honesty is the best policy (English)

Don't judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins (Indian)

Truth and oil will always come to the surface (Spanish)

Give neither counsel nor salt 'til you are asked for it (Italian)

Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous
(Confucius)

He who does not know one thing knows another (Kenyan)

Friends are lost by calling often and calling seldom (French)

The tongue is more to be feared than the sword (Japanese)

Divide the group into small groups and assign each group two of the sayings. Ask them to address the following questions:

- Think back to your childhood. Was this value taught in your family? Did it influence your behaviour?
- Is this value as strong today?

Review highlights of the discussion in the large group. Discuss how traditional societal values do not always hold the same importance from one generation to another.

Some people hold strong personal values and at times these can be in conflict with societal or cultural values.

Ask the group to look back to personal values written on the flipchart in Exercise 1 and discuss in the large group.

Questions to consider:

- Do the values we are exposed to as children reflect our personal values today? Are there conflicts? Why?
- How does the economic system influence societal values?
- How do our values influence our behaviour?

EVALUATION:

IDENTIFYING THE VALUE

1. What value are we protecting when we jail someone for a minor theft?

2. What value is expressed when we offer a prize to the Boy Scout who sells the most apples?

3. What value is expressed when a new father hands out cigars?

4. What value is expressed when a bride wears a white dress?

5. What value is expressed when a younger person stands up when an older person enters the room?

6. What value is shown when a hockey coach tells his players how to break the rules and not get caught?

7. What value is expressed when the father is served first at the table?

8. What value is expressed when a woman wears black when someone in the family has died?

9. What value is being expressed when we seal a letter?

10. What value is being expressed when the president has his office on the top floor?

11. What value is being expressed when city council cuts day-care?

12. What value is being expressed when a person drives a large, expensive car?
