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Positive About Youth

Activity ideas

Peer education group skills

Two activities exploring essential peer education skills for working with groups.

1 Talking to others

Aim

To understand the importance of listening as the key to good communication.

Process

Over the next few days choose some occasions when you have something to say to another person. Try to select a mixture of personal, casual or more formal contacts, i.e. with a friend, a family member, a person you work with, an official, a shop assistant, a stranger.

As soon as possible after each conversation, record how it went.

- Person you talked to
- How did you feel afterwards?
- What did the person do to make you feel like this?

Follow up

Think for a few moments about some of the individuals you generally feel most at ease talking to, for example having a moan, sharing a new idea, a problem, good news. Jot down your conclusions.

1. Why are some people easier to be open with than others?

2. What kinds of qualities do they have?

3. How does it make you feel to share something important with another person?

Now consider some of the people you generally find it difficult to be open and spontaneous with.

4. What is it that makes you feel uneasy about sharing with them?

5. What sorts of things do people do that shut you up when you would like to be more open with them?

Reflection

The first essential quality of a peer educator is not to know a lot or to be good at explaining things but to be a good listener. Be particularly aware in the next week of how *you* function as a listener. Can you spot in yourself in yourself any of the qualities that you identified in others?

You could have a go at doing more of the things that you have found encourage people to talk - and make an effort to reduce the things that stop them!

2 Listening with our eyes

Aim

To increase awareness of non-verbal communication.

Process

This is a good excuse for watching TV! If possible choose a soap that you know well but this time watch it with the sound turned off. Afterwards, try to tell yourself the story of what happened.

This will work even better if you have a friend who has watched normally. Get together afterwards to check out how near you have got to the true story.

Afterwards, ask yourself what signals you picked up. Add them to the list.

Non-verbal clues

- Movement of eyebrows
- Use of hands
- Position in chair
- etc.

Follow up

In the coming week, watch people around you who are too far away for you to hear them. What clues can you pickup about what they are thinking or feeling?

It would be even more interesting to watch people that you can hear talking to someone else. Watch a group of friends. Can you spot anyone who is saying one thing with their lips but something totally different with their body language? For example, you might hear someone saying "That's fine by me", when their whole expression clearly shows that they are really put out.

Reflection

We all think that we communicate with each other mainly by speaking. In fact we send out far more messages by other means, like facial expressions, eyes, clothes, position of the body. A good listener needs to be able to pick up these signals.

As a peer educator it helps to be sensitive to the signals people are sending out. Their body language is likely to be nearer to their feelings than their words.

It's worth remembering that you, too, will be sending out signals that might help or hinder others in their learning.

These activities are taken and adapted from *Yes, me!* previously published by UK Youth. Current publications are available from the UK Youth storefront. http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/ukyouth