

APPRECIATION ACTIVITIES

Self-Appreciation Circle

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION Participants go around a circle and share one thing they appreciate about themselves.

PURPOSE To reflect on the importance of appreciating their positive qualities; to build trust and a collaborative spirit; to end the day feeling connected and inspired

INTENDED OUTCOMES Increased self-awareness and trust

SKILLS DEVELOPED Self-reflection; communication

TOTAL TIME 30 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS No limit

MATERIALS Chairs in a circle

SETTING Large open space

INTRODUCTORY FRAME

One very important element of good collaboration is to know what we bring to the table. We often underestimate or undervalue ourselves which limits our capacity to bring forth our greatest potential. While humility is a valued characteristic in being a good leader and team player, recognizing and appreciating our own gifts is equally valuable and essential.

PROCESS

We will close the day by going around the circle and naming one specific thing that we appreciate about ourselves and how we contribute to the whole – whether that be in our families, workplace or society.

I Got Your Back Appreciations

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION Participants form groups of four and sit in a small circle. Each person takes a turn receiving appreciations by facing outward. The others in the group talk about them saying only positive things they have observed about their participation, qualities and skills.

PURPOSE To end the day feeling connected, appreciated and inspired

INTENDED OUTCOMES Increased sense of being seen and valued; increased ability to acknowledge the positive contributions of others

SKILLS DEVELOPED Community building, critical reflection, ability to give and receive appreciation

TOTAL TIME 15 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS At least 4

MATERIALS Chairs

SETTING Large room with open space

PROCESS

People stay in their teams. Each person receives 1-2 minutes of appreciation, depending on time.

- One participant turns their chair around so that they are facing outward. The other three people have two minutes to talk about all the things they appreciate about them, with as much specificity and detail as possible.
- Instead of “talking negatively behind someone’s back”, their partners speak about them only in positive affirmative ways so that they know that their colleagues have “got their back.”
- Each person takes a turn receiving appreciation from the circle.

Superhero Appreciations

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION Participants tape large pieces of paper to each other's backs like capes. With music in the background, they walk around writing and drawing appreciations, metaphors and images on each other's backs creating a super hero cape of affirmation and appreciation that can be taken home as a token of the training.

PURPOSE To close with a sense of affirmation and connection

INTENDED OUTCOMES Affirmation and connection

SKILLS DEVELOPED The ability to appreciate; community building

TOTAL TIME 45 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS No limit

MATERIALS Butcher paper, markers, music or sound system

SETTING Large room or outdoors

INTRODUCTORY FRAME

Cultivating a culture of appreciation helps us to build healthy and thriving organizations where people feel that their contributions are recognized and valued. One key skill in building creative leadership is the ability to recognize and affirm the unique gifts, talents and leadership qualities in others. In this exercise, we will call out and celebrate the super hero qualities within each one of us!

PROCESS

- Place a basket of markers, several rolls of masking tape and a stack of flip chart-sized paper in the middle of the floor.
- Instruct everyone to tape a flip chart sized paper to their back. Make sure the tape is in big enough strips so the paper actually stays. They may need to help each other get the paper on their backs. You can also make two holes and attach a string to hang it around their neck.

- Explain that this is an opportunity to gift each other with our reflections through words, images and metaphors. Invite participants to grab some markers and wander around the room writing appreciations or drawing images that reflect their appreciations on each other's backs. Coach everyone to try to get to every person's back if possible, and to offer appreciations that are substantive and not superficial. For example, instead of "You are nice," one might say "I loved your creativity and generosity in listening to others' ideas."
- Turn on some music to support the ambiance.
- Give a 5-minute warning before time is up, then invite participants to take off their capes and roll them up to take home and remind them of their amazing qualities.

REFLECTION

- How does it feel to be appreciated in this way?
- How does it feel to offer appreciation to others?
- Why is it important to cultivate a culture of appreciation in our workplaces and communities?

Web of Appreciations

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION Participants stand in a circle with a ball of yarn. The facilitator throws the yarn to someone, while holding onto the end, and appreciates something specific about that person. They hold onto a piece and throw the ball of yarn to someone else, expressing an appreciation for that person and so on until a web of appreciation is woven that includes everyone.

PURPOSE To build a culture of appreciation and respect and strengthen the community

INTENDED OUTCOMES Increased sense of being seen and appreciated; increased connection and trust

SKILLS DEVELOPED Expressing appreciation; observation; insight

TOTAL TIME 30 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS At least 5

MATERIALS Ball of yarn

SETTING Open space

INTRODUCTORY FRAME

As we have seen, systems thinking brings inter-relationships to the foreground. One way that we can strengthen relationships and our connections is to observe the positive qualities and contributions of others and to recognize them explicitly. This helps us to feel valued, seen and connected to the whole. To close our day, we are going to weave a visual web of connection and appreciation of our living system. We are each going to recognize someone and name something specific that we appreciate about them – their insights, way of being, relating, thinking, doing, how they have shown up in the group, what they have contributed, etc.

PROCESS

- Participants stand in a circle.
- The facilitator starts with a ball of yarn and throws it to someone, while holding onto one end. The facilitator appreciates something specific about that person.

- They hold onto the yarn and throw the ball to someone else, appreciating something specific about them.
- The process continues until everyone has been appreciated.

REFLECTION

- How does it feel to give and receive appreciation?
- How does that strengthen our relationships?
- How does expressing appreciation support or advance our work for social change?