

Activity: Drawing the Iceberg

Addresses: Communication; Intercultural Competence;

Aims/Intended Learning Outcomes:

To reflect about our own culture and other's cultures.

To share different aspects of cultures, and to learn how to identify them.

Time required: 45 minutes

Group size: any

Context/setting: In the classroom - On the campus - In the Halls of Residence - Outdoors

Description:

Put the word "culture" on a chalkboard or flipchart and ask participants to brainstorm what the word means. Record these ideas on the board or flipchart. Next to these ideas, draw a large iceberg on the board. Ask participants what they know about icebergs. Where should the waterline be on the iceberg? (Only about 20% of an iceberg is above the surface of the water.) Explain that some people have likened culture to an iceberg because there are some things you can tell about a person's culture just by looking at them (the 20% above the water). Most of the aspects about a person's culture are not so obvious, though, and are hidden below the water's surface.

Where on the icebergs would you place the aspects of culture that we brainstormed?

Write them up on the board/flipchart in the appropriate places on the iceberg.

□ Chances are that most of what they brainstormed will have been "tip" type things. Ask the participants to think of some of the aspects of culture that are not as readily apparent and would lie under the surface of the water. Most of these will have to do with values and perceptions of a situation. While music may lie above the water and be obvious, what the song is about often tells about what lies under the surface. Think about a song you like to listen to on the radio or your CD player. What kind of values does that song communicate about your culture? It's probably something that lies below the surface.

□ Discuss with participants that many people get stuck at the tip of the iceberg. They assume they know someone based on what they see. We need to look deeper than that to truly understand someone. Explain that we are going to help each other do this by sharing some of the less obvious aspects of our culture with each other.

□ Distribute blank icebergs and pencils to the participants. Explain that they will now have the opportunity to reflect on their own culture and complete an iceberg that reflects them. Show your example made during the planning session. Explain that some of the aspects about yourself are written on the tip. They correlate to the categories you put on the tip on your group iceberg. Some other things are below the water line and correlate with the categories we put below the surface on our group iceberg. Let participants know that they are not limited to or required to use all of the categories from the group iceberg on their personal cultural iceberg, but should use it as a guide. When participants appear to be wrapping up, call them together and ask that they share their icebergs with the large group.

▪ Ask participants to look deeper, beyond the tip of the iceberg, during the course of the day to try to figure out what aspects of the culture are being transmitted through the artwork this activity throughout the course of your day with participants. It is through reinforcement of key ideas and discussion around them that real learning takes place.

Materials needed: pens and papers

Inspired by:

Cultural and Linguistic Competence Icebreakers, Exercises, Videos and Movies.
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