

TIP #32 – DECEMBER 2008
PAST INFLUENCES PRESENT
CONTRIBUTED BY CAMI BISHOP

Objective: An ice breaker used to help participants gain meaningful knowledge and enhanced understanding of others.

1. Model the Way by demonstrating how to self-disclose for deeper understanding
2. Encourage the Heart by helping others relate to common experiences, trials and successes

Audience: Any age group, students or staff

Time Required: 2 minutes per person; 5 minutes for debriefing

Materials Needed/Set Up: None

Process:

1. Introduce the exercise by referencing Morris Massey's book, *What You Are is Where You Were When*, which suggests that where we were raised has a profound affect on life choices and who we become. Explain that this exercise involves self-disclosure and individuals may choose not to participate.
2. Ask participants to state their name, a brief description of where they were raised, and what influence that has on them now. Individuals may choose to reveal any number of things, such as location, time, family structure, significant events, or relationships with peers.
3. Debrief by asking what participants thought was the point of the exercise, what they learned, and how they are feeling about the group now.

Facilitator Tips: Be sure to emphasize that participants should self-disclose to their comfort level—revealing only information they do not mind having the group know—and participation is strictly voluntary. Be sensitive to individuals who may be dealing with issues of the past and, for follow-up, announce that you or counseling staff are available to explore any upsetting issues after the session.

Variations: If working with a large group, have participants break into smaller groups, adjusting the size of each group to the time available. Once the self-disclosing portion of this exercise is complete, ask participants to answer the debriefing questions within each of the smaller groups. Bring the large group back together and ask for a few volunteers to share their debriefing discussion. You can also conclude with a few ideas from the Massey book or show a video that embodies the such principles.

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