

Sample Introductory In - Person Session

1-1:20 Opening

1. Creating the Circle through Movement

[One of the facilitators/hosts invites participants to stand in a circle and make a movement originating from each person's heart and recite together opening words to create the circle.]

Potential Opening Words: Seeking to be fully present with ourselves, to be fully present with each other (open arms towards each other) and to be fully present as a circle (lift open arms to form the circle)

2. Introductions - What's In a Name? (Experiential activity)

[Facilitator invites each member to share their full name, the cultural origins or literal meaning of each part of their name and/or how their name is personally meaningful to them. Facilitator may wish to offer a model to initiate the sharing process and then invite others to share. The purpose of this activity is to offer a simple way to introduce oneself and inspire introspection about the cultural values reflected in one's name.]

Model: My full name is Christa Lee Olson

The last name, Olson, is my name of origin passed on by my father's family and is Norwegian in origin. My great grandfather immigrated from Norway and his son Elvin found his way to the Dakota's where he met my grandmother whose family was British. They moved west to Washington state. My last name signals the strong influence of Northern European cultural traditions upon our family. My given name, Christa, was a name my father liked. It has "Christ" as it's root and reminds me of the powerful message of loving one's neighbor, a message important in the Christian faith, but also in many of the other faith traditions drawn upon by Unitarian Universalists. My other given name "Lee" comes from my mother's side of the family and aligns me firmly with a strong line of women.

[As a segue to the next section of the session, the facilitator may want to highlight the diversity of experiences and values reflected through the names of those present in the circle and then invite the meal host to share.]

1:20-2:00 Sharing a Meal and Our Intercultural Journey

1. Introduction to _(Name of the Meal)_____ and its meaning to me. (Meal Host)

[Prior to this opening session the co-facilitators / hosts will determine if they would like to include sharing of a full lunch, an afternoon tea or desert (depending upon the time of day) as part of their session gatherings. It is helpful to have the co-hosts plan on preparing and setting out food prior to the formal start of the session, so that there is an easy transition from the opening to this sharing section. It's also helpful to have at least one item on the menu that is vegetarian in order to honor the health and cultural preferences of your participants.]

There are many intercultural dimensions to the art of cooking and the practice of sharing food with each other. When introducing the meal, the meal host(s) might want to talk about why they chose the particular dishes they chose, what kinds of ingredients are especially common in this cuisine, and what are the customs around serving and eating the food. It is helpful to illustrate

how the food is dished up and eaten in order to help with the awkwardness of knowing how to proceed when first introduced to a new dish from a new cuisine.

Model: Chinese Hot-Pot and its meaning.

This particular dish was chosen because the practice of eating the food is a collective process; it includes several people putting items that have been cut up in advance into the pot – in essence you are co-creating the hot pot. It is a common dish in the Chongqing region of China and was introduced to my family by the Chinese high school student who lived with us last year. So, for our family, it brings back memories of the wonderful experiences we had with Taili while she was living with us. We would typically eat this on a weekend day when we had time to purchase and chop up the ingredients and linger at the table together over conversation. Most of the ingredients were purchased at a specialty Asian foods store because the hot-pot base, the thinly sliced beef or lamb meats, and several of the Chinese vegetables can only be found at these stores. As the food is cooked, each person around the table can scoop out into their individual bowls the items they are most interested in eating. Chopsticks are typically used for eating the food from the bowls. A specialty tea is frequently served along with the dish to help counter what can be very hot and spicy soup bases.

[Segue to next portion. It's helpful for the facilitator to let the participants know that once everyone has had a chance to serve themselves, that they will continue their sharing with a question prompt.]

2. Sharing of ourselves and our intercultural stories.

[The purpose of this section is to help participants become more acquainted with each other through the the lens of how they express themselves and how they experience engaging with others who are culturally different. Some members may be more adept at talking about their passions and interests because they actively externalize these interests (for example artists and musicians), but others may be more timid in responding as it may be a latent or long held dream yet to be realized. It should be made clear that participants are welcome to pass with any questions.]

Prompt Question for Sharing: ***What skill, talent, passion, interest, hobby are you inspired to share with others?***

2:00 Transition -- Song/Chant and it's meaning.

[Each of the sessions are designed with a sharing and a vision or work session in mind. It's helpful to have a transition between the sharing of the meal and personal experiences to the working session of the meeting. Facilitators may want to invite participants to physically move from the table to another room. This transition might be further marked by singing a song or chant which the co-hosts select in advance of the session and explain why it is being offered.]

2:00-2:55 Vision Work

1) Our Time Together

A) Proclamation

[The second hour of the session is proposed below as a meeting, during which time the participants engage in creative interchange as they determine if they wish to create an

intercultural circle and if so how they will organize themselves going forward. Facilitators will likely wish to take notes to capture the ideas that are generated and plan on sharing them before the next session]

Model Proclamation / Purpose State: Shall we proclaim that we come together to create a Intercultural Circle for the purposes of (a) supporting each other on our intercultural journeys, (b) engaging in creative interchange as we understand what it means to be intercultural beings, and (c) co-creating intercultural learning opportunities for families in our communities.

B) Creating a Safe-Space.

--What is needed in order for this to be a safe space? Shall we create a covenant together to pledge that we will honor and respect these principles?

C) Logistics for coming together?

-- How frequently shall we meet? Where should we meet? What elements do we want to be sure to include each time we gather? Do we want to have a meal together each time? Can we have a rotating meal host? Do we want to include movement, music, poetry, each time?

-- How many people should be in a circle? Should it be a closed circle once created? Or should we invite others to join in as some members may move away?

-- Should we invite our families to our regular gatherings or plan gatherings that include them?

-- Should we invite members from other circles to join us as guests from time to time to promote interconnectivity and sharing between circles?

2) Longer Term Vision Work

--What might we create together that facilitates intercultural learning within and between families in our communities? in 2 years? in 10 years?

2:55-3:00 Closing Circle Ritual --Through words and movement.

[One of the facilitators/hosts invites participants to stand in a circle for the closing circle ritual. The facilitator can provide an example of a movement of release and then invite others to repeat with them three times.

Model movement: Lean forward to touch the ground and then bring your arms up through your heart center and pass in front of your mouth and then up above your head and out keeping your arms extended. As you do this movement you can let out an audible gasp of breath that gets progressively more vocalized each time you repeat the gesture. By the third time the sound may be a loud vocalized sound of joy with the broad gesture of release. -----