

## Constructivist Listening Personal Experience Panel (PEP)

The goals of constructivist listening are to encourage the talker to reflect on the meaning of events and ideas; express and work through feelings that are interfering with clearer thinking; construct new meanings; and make decisions.

### Personal Experience Panels

A small number (3 – 5) of people have a limited amount of time (4 – 6 minutes) to share their experiences related to a topic (for example, gender bias, leadership, teaching in diverse classrooms) with a larger group of people. This is not a panel to offer academic opinions.

### Leading the Personal Experience Panel:

It is important to think about the topics you choose for a PEP. When addressing equity issues, it is helpful to think about the group and what kinds of stories they are ready to listen to and what kind will be safe for them to talk about. Be aware that people carry painful memories of oppression, and it may not be safe enough to talk about these memories until trust has been established.

Ask three to five interested participants to volunteer to be on the PEP. Explain that their task will be to speak about their personal experiences about the selected issue. Tell them what the prompt will be and remind them of the purposes of the PEPs. If possible, it's helpful to meet with the panelist (even if briefly) as a group to review the prompt and begin to think about what they might want to talk about. Note: What they call up may not be what they're moved to reflect on once the panel starts, and that's natural. Ask if there is a particular order that they want to go in (optional).

### Logistics:

- Arrange the number of needed chairs for the panelist and listeners – remove any extra chairs
- Review the guidelines for the structure (including no food, drink, paper, etc.)
- Introduce the panelists and prompt
- Give each panelist equal time to talk. Use a timer and be sure to let the beeper beep long enough – about four beeps – so that the talker is aware that it went off. Let the speaker finish her/his sentence. Give wait time before the next speaker.
- After all panelist have shared, have a dyad.
  - Listeners can reflect on what they heard by responding to prompt:  
[Without referring directly to what the panelists shared.]
    - *What thoughts and feelings are coming up for you?*
  - Panelists can use this time to respond to such prompts as:  
[Facilitator stays with panelist]
    - *How did it feel to be on the PEP?*
    - *What would you have said more about?*
- Thank the panelist for sharing and applaud them.

- Remind all participants about the confidentiality guideline (including speaking directly to a panelist later about something they said).

### **Guidelines for all Support Structures**

- Each person is given equal time to talk. *Everyone deserves attention.*
- The listener(s) does not interpret, paraphrase, analyze, give advice or break in with a personal story. *People are capable of solving their own problems.*
- Confidentiality is maintained. (The listener doesn't talk about what the talker has said to anyone else or bring it up to the talker afterwards.) *A person needs to be assured of confidentiality in order to be authentic.* Also one's feelings at any moment are not representative of one's rational thinking (or perhaps even of one's feelings) five minutes later.
- The talker(s) do not criticize or complain about the listener(s) or about mutual colleagues during their time to talk. *A person cannot listen well when he/she is feeling attacked or defensive.*