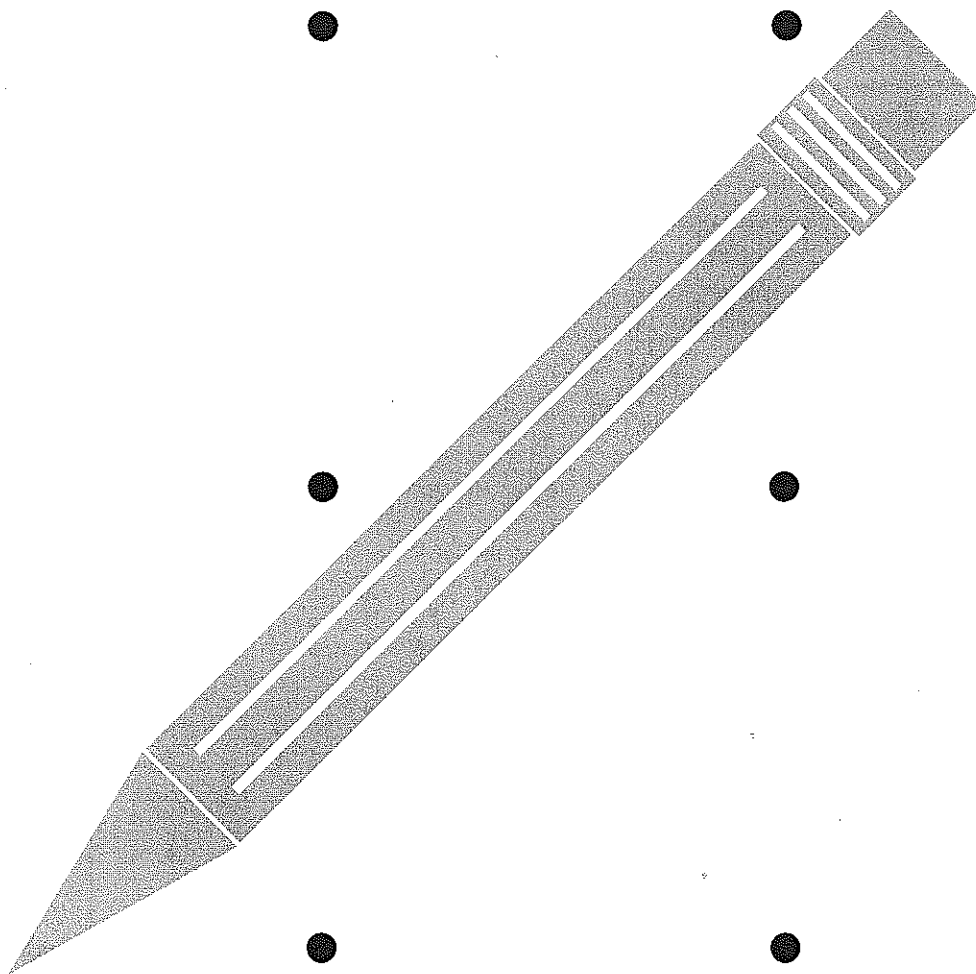


Diversity Activities

for

Youth and Adults



PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences
Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension

Why is appreciating diversity important for youth and adults?

The face of the United States and its workplace is changing. A growing number of neighborhoods and communities contain a complex mix of races, cultures, languages, and religious affiliations. At the same time, the widening gap between the rich and the poor is creating greater social class diversity. In addition, the U.S. population includes more than 43 million people with physical and mental challenges.

For these reasons, today's youth and adults are more likely to face the challenges of interacting and working with people different from themselves. The ability to relate well to all types of people in the workplace is a leadership skill that is becoming increasingly important. Understanding, accepting, and valuing diverse backgrounds can help young people and adults thrive in this ever-changing society.

How can these activities boost understanding of diversity?

Learning about diversity can be fun. The activities in this publication can help participants:

- Recognize how we place self-imposed limits on the way we think.
- Discover that, in many ways, people from different cultures and backgrounds hold similar values and beliefs.
- Become more aware of our own cultural viewpoints and the stereotypes we may have inadvertently picked up.
- Accept and respect the differences and similarities in people.

When and where should these activities be used?

The activities in this publication are appropriate for use by teachers, youth leaders, child care professionals, and human service professionals. While most of the activities are appropriate for older youth (middle school and above) and adults, some of the activities may be adapted for younger children. Decisions should be based on the facilitator's knowledge of the group's cognitive level and needs.

Some of the activities—including "Connect the Dots," "First Impressions," and "Proverbs"—can be used as discussion starters or icebreakers. Others may be the basis for an entire lesson, such as "What Do You Know or What Have You Heard?" In either case, the facilitator should allow enough time for discussion at the end of each activity. Debriefing is important for dealing with unresolved feelings or misunderstandings. It is equally important to conduct activities in an atmosphere of warmth, trust, and acceptance.

Connect the Dots

Goal:

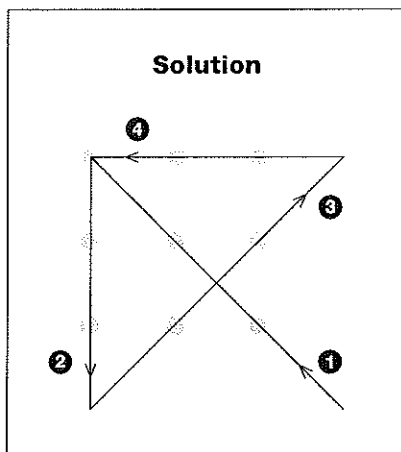
Participants will experience the fact that we often subconsciously limit our perspectives and alternatives.

Time:

15–30 minutes, depending on discussion.

Materials:

Copies of the “Connect the Dots” handout, a pencil with an eraser for each participant, an overhead projector, and a marker.



Procedure:

Begin the activity by telling participants that you'd like to challenge their thinking. Pass out copies of the “Connect the Dots” handout and pencils. Ask participants to try to complete the puzzle following the directions on the handout. Ask participants who already know the solution or figure out the solution before time is called to please turn their paper over and allow the others to figure out the solution themselves. Give participants three to five minutes to work on the problem.

At the end of that time, have participants put down their pencils. Ask if anyone has found the solution. If so, ask that person to come to the overhead projector and demonstrate the solution for the group. If no one has found the solution, draw the correct solution for the group.

Discussion:

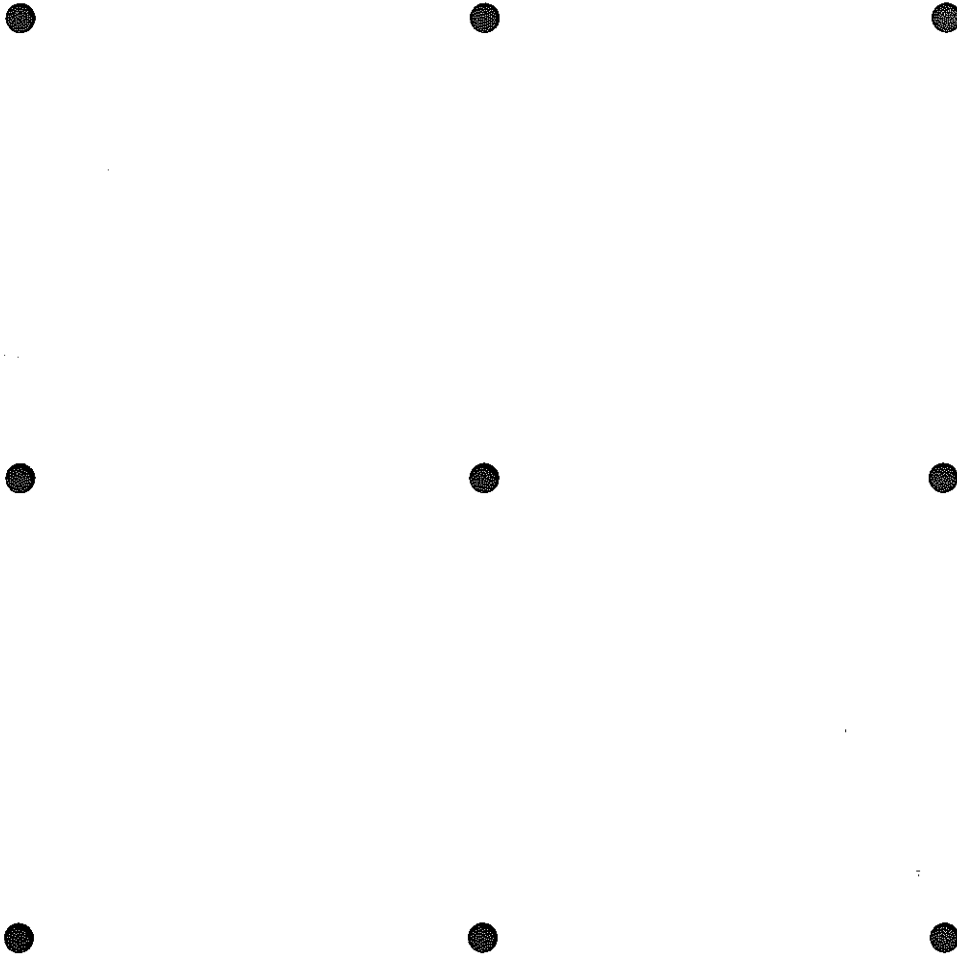
Why is it that most of us did not think of going outside the boundaries to solve the problem?

To solve the problem, we had to get outside of our usual way of thinking—outside of the box we put ourselves in. We had to literally draw outside the lines. This is what is required of us when we interact with people who are different from us. We have to look at other ways of “thinking about thinking.”

Drawing outside the lines is very difficult because we are so used to our own way of thinking and our own point of view that it is hard to see other points of view. To successfully interact with people from different backgrounds and different cultures, we must learn to look at the world from many points of view.

Ask participants to share examples of situations when finding a good solution to a problem required thinking “outside of the box.”

Connect the Dots



Directions:

Connect all of the dots with four straight lines. Do not lift your pencil off the paper. Do not retrace any line. Lines may cross if necessary.
