

"NEW" DIRECTIONS ACTIVITY

Adapted from John W. Newstrom, 1983 by Darla K. Deardorff, 2008.

Purpose:

To demonstrate how cultural conditioning has a powerful impact on individuals.

Target Audience:

This activity is for groups of any size who need to explore the impact of cultural conditioning.

Time:

1-2 minutes to set up and introduce the activity, 2 minutes to do the activity, 3-4 minutes to debrief and discuss.

Procedure:

Tell the group that you will be giving them some directions. Ask them to stand up, face the front of the room and then give them a couple directions such as "Point up." "Point in front of you." "Point to your right." Now tell them you will give them some "new" directions - a visual can be provided that outlines those new directions (see below). Give them a little time to understand that transition from "old" directions to "new" directions. Then test them on their "new" directions by calling out the old directions and seeing how many successfully follow the new directions.

OLD DIRECTIONS	NEW DIRECTIONS
UP	RIGHT
DOWN	LEFT
LEFT	DOWN
RIGHT	FRONT
FRONT	UP

Debrief:

This activity illustrates the power of cultural conditioning. You can discuss how this cultural conditioning impacts our interactions with others. Discuss how we need to recognize the power of cultural conditioning and brainstorm ways to move beyond this to more successfully interact with those from different cultural backgrounds. (You can also mention different cultural meanings about the practice of pointing - ie with one's hand, one's index finger, head, etc and how that varies by culture).