

“I Have a Secret” Snowball Supportive Activity

Goals:

- To help youth become more sensitive to how difficult it can be to tell personal or secret things about yourself.
- To help youth build confidence in their ability to be a great listener and peer helper.

Have Ready:

- One small sheet of paper and pen for each participant.

Instructions:

- Give everyone a piece of scrap paper and a pen.
- Ask them to think of a secret, something that they would not tell many people or any one at all about. It can be a secret thought, or can something they may have done. Assure them that they will not be asked to write the secret down or tell the secret to anyone. Give them 30 seconds to think of a secret. If people find it difficult, tell them to think of something that most people in the room do not know about them.
- Ask the group to think about what it would take from someone before they would be able to tell them about your secret. Now write one word, group of words, or a phrase that tells what they would need. Remind them that other people will read this, so they should not write down the secret.
- After they are finished writing, have youth stand in a circle, clear of chairs and food.
- Tell everyone to ball up their paper and on the count of 3 everyone throw that paper at each other, and just keep throwing until you tell them to stop (like a snowball fight).
- When you say stop, everyone finds a “snowball” and returns to their spot.

- Go around the group and ask them to read their papers. Write their answers up on a flipchart or board. Record everything, even those answers that imply there is no way the secret could be shared.
- To save time, when a common word like “trust” or “non-judgmental” gets read, you can ask, “how many other people have that one their sheet?” and put as many check marks beside it.
- The list can include: **Trust, confidentiality, good listener, understanding, caring, respectful, non-judgmental**, acceptance, shared experience, warmth, kindness, friendship, etc.
- Note: Bolded qualities should be added if not mentioned by the participants.

Debrief:

- Ask youth, “**What are the most common responses?**”
- “**What could this list also represent?**” Characteristics of a great friend or support person.
- If “same experience” comes up ask if you have to have had the same experiences in order to be helpful/give resources/etc?
- Notice that words such as expert, certified counsellor, college graduate, are not usually on this list. Stress to youth that they do not have to be these things in order to be helpful. Chances are if the things on the list are what we need, then they are also what other youth need.
- Sometimes people will feel really comfortable telling their secrets, while others are more cautious and private. Both are okay, but extremes on either end can be problematic.
- “Bottling things up” can lead to an explosion of emotion, whereas telling everybody everything and having a lack of boundaries can leave us vulnerable.
- Relate the idea of boundaries to being a support person to their friends and peers, such as letting people know when you are able/not able to talk, setting times and places for support (i.e. “call me to talk, but not after 10pm”), and how/when to refer someone elsewhere.