

# PERSONAL RIGHTS I – AFFIRMING PERSONAL RIGHTS

## **GOALS:**

- To identify our personal rights in some of the relationships we have.
- To affirm our personal rights.
- To understand what is blocking us in affirming our rights.

## **RATIONALE:**

Assertiveness is possible only when we believe that we have some basic human rights and have the confidence to act on those beliefs. The steps to accepting our rights are:

- Identifying what our personal rights are
- group support to affirm personal rights
- awareness of beliefs that undermine our rights
- challenging the beliefs that undermine our rights

## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Flip chart, markers, and copies of *Nine Fundamental Rights* for each participant.

## **METHOD:**

### **Exercise 1:**

Ask participants to brainstorm a list of all the roles we play in our lives, such as a friend, mother, employee, or consumer.

Flipchart ideas. Explain that participants are to generate a list of personal rights they have in these relationships.

Tell participants to form small groups according to the role they want to work on and brainstorm a list of rights. Ask each group to record their list on a flipchart and when finished, post the lists on the wall and share with the large group.

### **Questions to consider:**

- What was it like to make this list?
- Does anyone in the large group have questions about the list?
- Are there any we disagree with?

You may wish to use the *rights* generated by the group as a handout or use the sample ***Nine Fundamental Rights*** attached.

### **Exercise 2: Belief in Rights**

Ask participants to look at the list of rights and choose one they have difficulty in accepting ownership. With a partner, discuss:

- Where did you learn that you did not have this right?
- Would you give this right to others? Why not to yourself?
- What would happen if you gave yourself permission to accept this right?

Encourage participants to discuss their example with the large group.

### **Note to Coach:**

In multicultural groups, there may be very different ideas about what basic rights belong to the individual. It is important to be non-judgmental about other people's belief systems. It might be useful to compare and contrast beliefs about rights in Canada and beliefs in some of the participants' countries of origin. Coach can ask what it's like for participants to be introduced to new ideas of rights. Sometimes, new ideas of rights are not liberating, and in fact, cause conflict for a new Canadian. For example, there is often tension in a family when a teenager is exposed to new rights enjoyed by her peers in Canada, while the family subscribes to different customs from their country of origin.

### **Exercise 3: Rights Affirmation**

Ask participants to choose one right they would like to affirm as their right. It may be a right that they have not been aware they have, or one that they would particularly like to emphasize at this point in their lives.

Encourage participants to stand up and disclose the right they have chosen in an assertive voice:

*"I have the right to..."*

OR

Participants can write down their right, hold up the paper, and say their right out loud.

**Variation:**

Ask participants to choose a right they have that leads them into conflict with another person and share that situation with a partner. In dyads, instruct them to do a brief role-play of the situation, with one partner asserting her/his right with the other.

Request volunteers to demonstrate their role-play to the large group.

**Note to Coach:**

See instructions for role -playing. p. 42.

**EVALUATION:**

Review the session and ask participants what they have learned.

## **NINE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

every person has...(but doesn't always use)

1. The right to have and express your own feelings and opinions.
2. The right to refuse requests without having to feel guilty or selfish.
3. The right to set your own priorities and make your own decisions.
4. The right to ask for what you want (realizing that the other person has the right to say no).
5. The right to maintain your dignity by being properly assertive - even if the other person feels hurt - as long as you do not violate the other person's basic human rights.
6. The right to be treated with respect and dignity.
7. The right to be listened to and taken seriously.
8. The right to choose not to assert yourself.
9. The right to make mistakes.