

Recognizing and Shifting our Biases

Understanding Youth Emotions with RULER

Video 7

Note: One of the most common barriers to recognizing how others are feeling is our own biases. Many of our biases around emotions center around our experience, or lack of experience with genders, races, ethnicities, cultures, and personal histories different from our own.

Because of this, we may assume others feel the same as we do, or we may have a hard time understanding how they are feeling. To reduce our biases around others' emotions, we can get to know people who are different from us and ask them how they are feeling, rather than assuming. Asking the question removes opportunities for misperception and judgment based on our own biases.

Activity Summary: In this activity, staff reflect on their biases and look for opportunities to shift their mindsets with perspective taking.

Time: 30-40 minutes (including time to watch the video)

Materials

- paper and pen

Facilitator Directions

1. Introduce the activity:

“Sometimes our own biases, attitudes or beliefs about certain groups can interfere with our perceptions and interpretations of them. In this activity, we will explore how to be aware of the roadblocks to both approaching our emotions and to responding to the needs of those around us.”

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2. Say:

"Close your eyes or gaze downward. Think back to a time when a coworker, youth, parent, or caregiver approached you regarding an issue that they were having."

Ask staff the following prompts, one at a time, taking a pause before proceeding to the next one.

- *"What were they saying?"*
- *"What was the tone of their voice?"*
- *"What body language were they displaying?"*
- *"How pleasant or unpleasant did you feel during the interaction?"*
- *"How much energy was coursing through your body?"*
- *"What was causing you to feel this way?"*
- *"What feeling word would you use to label your emotion?"*

3. Say:

"Now, let's consider how the other person was feeling and your response." Pause to give staff time to consider the following prompts and write their responses:

- *"Why did you think the other person felt that way?"*
- *"Was your response based on previous experience?"*
- *"Did you approach the situation as an emotion scientist or an emotion judge?"*
- *"How do you think your own biases may have played a role in how you were perceiving the other person's feelings or behaviors?"*
- *"What questions could you have asked to learn more about the other person and how they were feeling?"*

4. Debrief:

- *"How did considering the other person's perspective change your thinking about the situation?"*
- *"If you had an opportunity for a do-over, what would you do differently?"*