

Touch Someone

Possible Activity Introductions to read to group:

Appreciation Focus: We are now going to engage in an activity that will strengthen your skills in the art of appreciation and acknowledgement. In a culture that gives us extensive training in judgment and criticism, it can change our lives to focus instead on building skills to empower ourselves as well as others. We will almost always have more success when we praise, encourage and inspire others toward their greatness as opposed to criticizing or admonishing them for their shortcomings. During “Touch Someone” please relax and remain open to all of the feelings the activity brings up for you.

Social Justice Focus: We are now going to engage in an activity that will strengthen your skills in the art of appreciation and acknowledgement – one of the most powerful tools that exists for social transformation. We will almost always have more success when we praise, encourage and inspire others toward their greatness as opposed to criticizing or admonishing them for their shortcomings. Our cultural bias of *overvaluing* emotional control and *undervaluing* emotional flow can block us from healing fully from feelings of rage and broken heartedness attached to injustices in the world. This effort to suppress and deny our deepest sorrows ends up blocking our deepest joys and passions and connections to other human beings. During “Touch Someone” please relax and remain open to all of the feelings the activity brings up for you. So let yourself be inspired, let yourself be moved, let yourself be open to the courage, the perseverance, and the love that human beings demonstrate in the face of unfathomable challenges.

Procedures:

Decide ahead of time how many people at a time you want to bring into the middle to do the touching and how many statements you want to read for each round based on the size of your group and how much time you have. For example, a group of twenty participants can be divided into five rounds, with four different people “touching” for each round.

Have participants start the activity by sitting in the circle with their eyes closed. Then the facilitator explains that once the activity begins everyone will close their eyes and remain silent. The only exception to this is that participants need to have their eyes open when being selected as a “toucher” for the next round of “Touch Someone”. When called upon to come to the middle of the circle, their job is to listen to the statement being read and touch those people sitting in the circle who come to mind. In other words, the person will touch all those people for whom the statement applies. During each round, those seated in the circle (i.e., “receivers”) are asked to keep their eyes closed, refrain from making sounds, and notice what it feels like to be touched.

Begin the activity with everyone sitting with their eyes closed. The facilitator states that they will touch some people now and when they are touched they should come to the middle of the circle. Remind everyone that if they are not touched right now to keep their eyes closed and remain seated and quiet. Then read off a statement saying: “*Touch someone who...*” and fill in the *statement “is a good role model.”* See the attached list of example statements. Allow time for people in the middle to touch a number of people then move to the next statement. After the round has been completed, ask those participants who just provided the touching to return to their seats and close their eyes.

Remind others sitting in a circle to keep their eyes closed as well. Then repeat the process by selecting a new group of people to do the touching until all participants have had a chance to be in the middle.

Possible Concerns:

In some groups, there may be some participants who would not naturally be touched very often during this activity. This can be because they do not know others in the group well or because they are not well liked. A few remedies to avoid this problem include:

- the facilitator can stay in the middle throughout the activity and touch people who are less known or less popular,
- the facilitator provides frequent reminders to participants to touch not just those people who come immediately to mind, but to try and include everyone, and
- include several statements that focus on people who are more quiet, reserved, less known (i.e. “Touch someone who didn’t speak a lot, but was always listening”).

If needed, explain to participants that appropriate touching is gentle and sincere. In other words, those seated are not to be groped, hit hard and/or thumped on the head.

If the group has difficulty being quiet or keeping their eyes closed, the facilitator should gently remind them to do so. Participants can also be reminded that it is common to feel uneasy accepting compliments because our culture teaches us to be more comfortable exchanging put downs and criticism. Encourage people to relax through any discomfort and to keep their eyes closed and remain silent. If a group has a really tough time during “Touch Someone” the facilitator can stop the activity in a completely non-blaming way and process why it may be hard to express care for others. The group can then be asked if they would like to continue the activity or try to do it at another time.

Possible Processing Questions:

The following are possible questions to raise during the processing of this activity: *How did that feel for everyone? What was it like? What emotions came up for you? Was anyone surprised by some of the touches they got? What do you think about the importance of appreciations? Were you a bit more likely to believe the touches were sincere since you couldn’t see the person doing the touching? What are ways we could create more appreciation in our lives?*

Processing Points:

In this activity it is very common for participants to be surprised about the statements they were touched for. The truth is that everyone is really this amazing and worthy of such feedback. Unfortunately we live in a culture that has us forgetting to show how much we care about each other and how impressed we are with each other. If we learn how to show this care, we can increase our power, our possibilities and our connections to others.

Processing Points:

In this activity that we are demonstrating one of the most important aspects of humanity: the power of touch. How we can convey just what needs to be conveyed with a hand on a shoulder, or briefly touching the hand of another, or gently grabbing their elbow... such motions can convey SO much, just through a simple touch, we can do so much good. (Thanks to Brian Ivory)

Processing Options:

After large group processing takes place, this activity works well when participants pair up to do a listening partnership. Each person would get several minutes to respond to the following statement: *“The amazing truth about me and my power to transform the world is Encourage people to sound as much like Gandhi, mother Teresa or any of their heroes as possible.”* Remind participants that the world needs us in touch with our magnificence and unafraid to use it in order to make the world a better place!!!!

Touch Someone – Example statements

First Round:

- ❖ Makes a difference
- ❖ Is a good role model
- ❖ Has effected your life
- ❖ Makes you feel special
- ❖ You really admire
- ❖ You believe in
- ❖ Has a good personality
- ❖ Cares about people
- ❖ You trust
- ❖ Is kind hearted
- ❖ You will never forget
- ❖ Is love in action

Second Round:

- ❖ Helps you grow
- ❖ Lets their soul guide their actions
- ❖ Is open minded
- ❖ Helps you out a lot
- ❖ Shows you how fabulous you are
- ❖ Is a hero or shero of yours
- ❖ Makes good decisions
- ❖ Is excellent at their work
- ❖ You would pick to get stuck on a desert island with
- ❖ Is fun to be around
- ❖ Is a good mentor
- ❖ Is helpful and supportive

Third Round:

- ❖ Helps you see your strength and abilities
- ❖ Will support you in the future
- ❖ Believes in you
- ❖ Has a great attitude
- ❖ Shows that you are fabulous
- ❖ Makes you laugh
- ❖ You think is fabulous
- ❖ Is respectful
- ❖ Is beautiful inside and out
- ❖ Makes you feel valued
- ❖ You want to get to know more
- ❖ Is a brilliant thinker

Fourth Round:

- ❖ Gives you warm fuzzies
- ❖ Makes a big difference in their community or organization
- ❖ You seek out when you are vulnerable
- ❖ Sees how good you are
- ❖ Is good at reaching out
- ❖ Has a beautiful smile
- ❖ You will never forget
- ❖ Makes you smile
- ❖ You would love to get closer to
- ❖ Is inspiring
- ❖ Is a good friend
- ❖ Is creative

Fifth Round:

- ❖ Is a catalyst for growth in others
- ❖ Is friendly
- ❖ Is thoughtful
- ❖ Has touched your heart
- ❖ Pleasantly surprised you
- ❖ Treats people with respect
- ❖ Makes a difference
- ❖ Has taught you something valuable
- ❖ Shows how likeable you are
- ❖ Thinks you are awesome
- ❖ Sees your talents
- ❖ Thinks you are a good listener

Sixth Round (if needed):

- ❖ Has learned something from you
- ❖ Sees your beauty inside and out
- ❖ Is a good leader
- ❖ You will never forget
- ❖ You really admire
- ❖ Is very creative
- ❖ Makes you feel loved
- ❖ Believes in you
- ❖ Reaches out to you
- ❖ Supports you well
- ❖ Sees you as a good friend
- ❖ Sees your talents

Seventh Round (if needed):

- ❖ Treats you with respect
- ❖ Makes a difference

- ❖ Is a good listener
- ❖ Gets things done
- ❖ Is caring
- ❖ Supports people well
- ❖ You want to keep as a new friend
- ❖ Lives to serve
- ❖ Knows how to make you laugh
- ❖ Helped you out recently
- ❖ You think is fun
- ❖ You would completely trust

Eighth Round (if needed):

- ❖ Makes good decisions
- ❖ Who honors their commitments
- ❖ Is an amazing ally
- ❖ Has shown courage in the face of a challenge
- ❖ Is compassionate
- ❖ Gives you hope
- ❖ Humorous ones to use if appropriate:
- ❖ Is having a good hair day
- ❖ Would cover for you if you passed gas in a meeting
- ❖ Would tell you if there was something in your teeth or up your nose
- ❖ Add your own – anything appropriate to the group and setting!