

## **FIVE MODELS OF FRIENDSHIP GROUP EXERCISE GUIDELINES FOR TRAINER**

### **AIM**

This exercise helps to raise awareness about our underlying attitudes to foreigners as we seek to befriend them. It brings to the surface what may have been unconsciously held attitudes before. Even if a participant does not 'get the right answer' there is benefit in simply doing the exercise.

### **WHO IS IT FOR?**

The exercise is intended for those who offer friendship to international visitors – whether just beginning or veterans.

### **SET UP**

This exercise works best where there are groups of four to five seated around a table so that the cards can be laid out where everyone can see them. Six to a group is possible but should be the upper limit. It is also possible to do singly or in pairs, but some of the interactive benefit is lost. There should be one set of cards per group.

### **TIMING**

Native speakers of English should be able to complete the exercise within 5-8 minutes. Allow a little longer for groups with non-native speakers, larger groups or those with less experience of befriending foreigners. Allow a further 5 minutes for feedback, depending on your group and your training programme.

### **PROCEDURE**

Give a set of cards to each table. Read the introductory paragraph on the instructions "When relating to internationals..."

Ask each group to spread out their cards. Read the instructions to them or refer them to the instruction card in each pack. Check understanding and let them start. Suggest they begin with the yellow statements (= describes the local person's view) followed by blue (= international's viewpoint) and finishing with the green (= the assessment). With inexperienced groups move around the tables during the exercise to check understanding and offer guidance if some are struggling or have made some wild guesses. Don't give answers but suggest they might review a card that is placed wrongly. Encourage reading the text carefully. Groups making good progress can be left alone.

### **FEEDBACK**

Begin by choosing one of the models pictured and ask a group spokesman what assessment they made (green card). See if others agree. Go through each model in this way to check understanding. Allow for some flexibility in assessments. If any group gets it spectacularly 'wrong' (see aim) insist that this is not a competition – the process is what counts.

Ask – Did you recognise yourself in any of these models? Encourage one or two participants to share personal insights if they feel comfortable.

### **ANSWERS**

#### ***1 Teacher - Pupil***

The **local** person sees: the international as needing his friendship and help. The international is the one who needs to know about life in this country. He happily offers his help as a favour to his new friend.

The **international** sees: A friendly person who is offering his help. It is usually appreciated and they are glad to receive it. However, they could feel patronised, and if the relationship does not quickly move on from this, the friendship cannot be meaningfully sustained as the international is always the one receiving and cannot give anything back. In some circumstances he may feel talked down to.

**This is a common and acceptable starting point and is fine as long as it moves on from there in good time. It is more acceptable if the local person is significantly older than the international.**

## **2 Revered foreign visitor**

**Local:** Befriending the international is a great honour. He/she regards them with great fascination and interest, asking many questions about life in their home country. He has always wanted to meet someone from that country.

**International:** sees a friendly person who is interested in them and their culture. They may enjoy the attention and will happily tell them about their background and culture. They might feel, however, that their friend is somehow in love with their own perception of the visitor's national identity or culture rather than the individual with whom they are making friends.

**This may be a good place to start in a relationship as long as it moves on. It can be common in Christians who have a 'heart' for a particular nation or people group.**

## **3 Equality means similarity**

**Local:** the international is at heart just the same as you or me. Doesn't want to act superior and keen to be friends so talks to the visitor as someone to laugh and joke with in the same way as a local. Any questions about the visitor's nationality or culture should be kept to a minimum because doesn't want to make them feel different.

**International:** Despite initial pleasure at finding a friendly person who is willing to talk to them, they quickly feel that this person does not understand them at all and is really not interested in them or their culture in any way. They do not understand their new friend's jokes or colloquialisms which make them feel even more like an outsider.

**This is the norm for most locals who have not had experience in befriending internationals. Whilst not the most damaging, it is bound to be unsuccessful and leaves internationals to feel like outsiders**

## **4 Expert on Foreign affairs**

**Local:** has read about 'Farawayland', its culture and geography. He has also read a couple of missionary biographies set in that country. Last year, he had a week's holiday there and, although he would never say so, he feels that he is a bit of an expert on Farawayland and its culture, and is keen to tell his new friend how much he knows. Surely his international visitor will enjoy talking to someone who really understands his background and culture?

**International:** is immediately impressed that this person knows something about his country and the friendship may begin well. But their local friends' remarks very quickly become embarrassing, even offensive, as it is clear that his knowledge is partial, inaccurate and biased. The local friend has made lots of judgments and assumptions based on very little knowledge, and so frequently makes insensitive comments. Worse still, his friend is so proud of his 'expertise', that he is unwilling to learn from the visitor that his perceptions are in many ways wrong. The friendship is inevitably stifled.

**This is the most damaging, potentially reinforcing distance instead of encouraging friendship.**

## **5 Equal but different**

**Local:** the international is a friend to be treated with as much respect as he would any friend, but with special care since there is an awareness that the new friend comes from a very different background to himself. He will sometimes take the role as teacher, helping his international friend fit into life in this country, but will also at times become the student, asking the international about their own way of life and background, making an effort to find out as much as he can about his new friend.

**International:** sees a person with whom he can begin to relax. It is a great privilege to be in a relationship with someone who will not only help him fit into life in this country, but is also keen to find out about life in his country. To be able to talk about home without fear of being thought strange or having the person jump to false conclusions is a great relief. The relationship can develop quickly.

**This is the best way of maintaining a meaningful friendship, but relationships with internationals may not always start off in such an ideal way.**