

## RISE MODULE: UNDERSTANDING OUR IDENTITIES

*“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” – Aristotle*

### ACTIVITY: IDENTITY CIRCLES

#### Objectives:

1. Explore labels central to our identities and how our identities are constructed.
2. Demonstrate the fluidity and centrality that our identities can hold.
3. Discuss the challenges that come with being identified in particular ways.
4. Identify ways in which diversity can be valuable.

**Duration: 30 minutes**

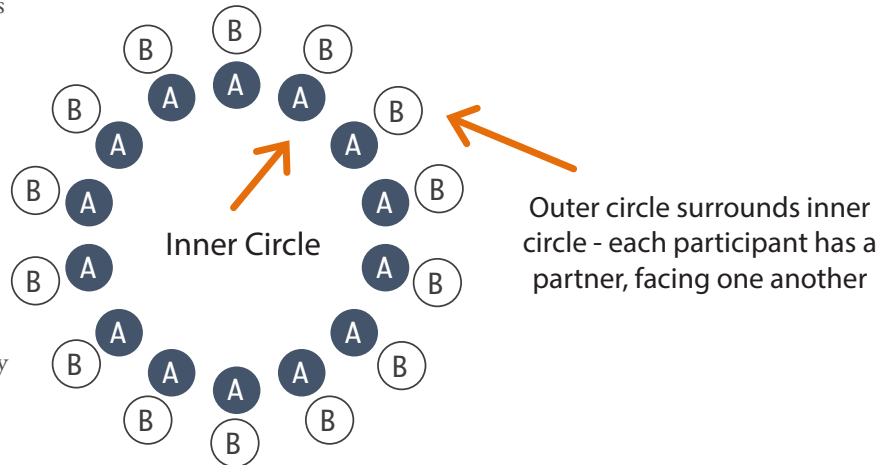
#### MATERIALS:

- Flashcards – 10 per participant (less can be used if there are time constraints)
- Pens/markers – one per participant

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

**Provide 10 flashcards to each participant.**

1. Ask the participants to write one identity descriptor about themselves on each of the 10 flashcards. Encourage them to write the descriptors in large font so they are clearly visible.
2. Next ask the participants to form two circles. One should face outward and one inward so that each participant has a partner to whom they are facing. Additional circles should be formed for larger groups.
3. Participants then will discuss with their partners for two minutes per person what is written on each card and how these words represent their identity. Encourage participants to elaborate on their chosen words.
4. After four minutes, bring the participants back together and ask for volunteers to share examples of their identity descriptors. Use the suggestions below to support the first round debrief.
  - Discuss the diversity participants have within themselves – everyone used a variety of words to describe themselves.
  - Ask participants whether their set of 10 identity descriptors could be an exact with another person’s 10. Emphasize the uniqueness of each individual. Diversity should therefore be celebrated.
  - Ask participants if they encountered words similar to their partner. This occurrence highlights similarities across people.
5. Next, instruct participants to rip one of their cards in half. Give them the opportunity to make their own determination for which card they will rip.
6. Ask the outer circle to rotate one place to the right. The new pairing will now discuss why they ripped the card.
7. After four minutes, bring the participants back together and ask for volunteers to share the card they ripped and why. Use the suggestions below to support the second round debrief.
  - Are some identity descriptors or labels more or less relevant to your sense of identity?
  - Ask how participants felt when ripping up part of themselves. For some participants, it may have been traumatic to do so. In what situations do we find ourselves in each day where we have to give up a part of ourselves?



8. Next, instruct participants to rip all but one card in half. This final card should be the descriptor that is most core to the person's identity.
9. Ask the outer circle to rotate one place to the right. The new pairing will now discuss their final card and why it is core to their identity.
10. After four minutes, bring the participants back together and ask for volunteers to share their final card and why it was chosen. Use the suggestions below to support the final round debrief.
  - What makes this card the best descriptor of you?
  - Is it a demographic label or is it a value?
  - Usually participants end up with value-based descriptors; that points to a desire to be known for more than just the way we appear physically.

## SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Why is our identity important?
2. What is self-esteem? (Positive or negative evaluations of our identities.)
3. What identities might be applied to us regardless of whether we accept them or not? How does it feel when someone else defines your identity?
4. Is African American a race or an ethnicity? Is Hispanic/Latino a race or an ethnicity?
5. Why might an understanding of diversity be important to you as students, athletes, coaches, administrators, etc.?
6. As we consider diversity, we therefore begin with ourselves as a reference point and realize that diversity is relative to the person considering it.
7. Surface level diversity vs. deep diversity.
  - a. **Surface level diversity:** characteristics like race, age, gender, etc. that can be used to differentiate us.
  - b. **Deep diversity:** our skills, values and principles we stand for, that make us different from one another.
8. An understanding of who we are and how we represent ourselves (values, characteristics, beliefs) helps us to understand how and why we may differ and, more importantly, how we do not.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. It is important to reflect on who we are, our values and the multifaceted nature of our identities.
2. A great way to bridge our differences and leverage our similarities is to know who we are and gain an understanding of the identities of others.
3. Diversity benefits teams as it expands our skill base and broadens our perspectives.

## NEXT STEPS: Take the following actions after completing the activity with your team.

1. Share photos on social media and tag/mention RISE.



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2. Discuss your experience with students, athletes, coaches, athletic department staff and other organization members. Identify ways you and your school/organization can help lead the way in improving race relations and driving social progress.

## FEEDBACK:

RISE welcomes feedback as we seek to continually improve our tools and resources. We encourage all participants to share their feedback by completing an online survey at [bit.ly/risetools](http://bit.ly/risetools). Our Leadership & Education Programs team can be reached at [education@RISEtoWIN.org](mailto:education@RISEtoWIN.org).