

“Where I’m From” Icebreaker

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is for participants to get to know each other as individuals with distinct histories, backgrounds, and traditions. Knowing something personal about others helps learning communities and teams function more effectively. It is much more difficult to treat someone else in a callous or unsympathetic way when you more about where they’re from.

This activity can also encourage:

- appreciation for different perspectives
- respectful treatment, particularly when dealing with challenging situations and tasks
- participation by practicing speaking aloud about something familiar.

Process:

- 1) Ask participants to write down 3 things for each of the following prompts. For a short introduction, ask participants to name three things for just one of the prompts.
 - Items found inside a home where you grew up
 - Items found outside a home where you grew up
 - Names of people from your past
 - Sayings from your childhood
 - Foods or dishes from your childhood
 - Places where you hold childhood memories
- 2) The facilitator reads his/her own list inserting the phrase “I am from...” before each list.
- 3) Ask for a couple of volunteers to read aloud their own lists, again inserting “I am from...” before each list. You can also ask people to read their answers in pairs or trios.

Example

I am from books, cat and dog hair, kid-art proudly displayed

I am from beach rocks, driftwood, and pine needles

I am from Grandpa CP, Aunt Stevie, and Grandma Constance

I am from “You learn something new every day” “Just take one bite, you might like it” “Nothing is more important than staying in touch with your siblings”

I am from Chicken and Dumplings, Pumpkin Pie, and Hotdog Casserole

I am from cigar boxes, antique bottles full of agates, and family traditions

Developed from a poem by George Ella Lyon <http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>, this teaching activity is described in: Christensen, Linda (1998) Inviting Student Lives into the Classroom: Where I'm From. *Rethinking Schools*, 12(2): 22-23. Available on-line at: <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/where-i-m-from/>