

Week 3 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

This past week, facilitators reported that groups are seeing a deeper level of communication as students are more curious to learn about each other's viewpoints, and explore their differences constructively. The majority of facilitators have also reported good or excellent dynamics in their sessions, and that students are now more open to discussing controversial / emotionally charged topics, which is great to see. Most groups had the activity Culture and Background which is mainly based on providing the necessary means to explore and learn about one another's cultures. It was a great way to develop highlight the multiple aspects of identity and culture among participants. Afterwards, groups continued their engagement with the second set of small-group discussions related to the final project. During this activity, students were broken up into smaller groups of twos or threes, allowing them to deepen their engagement with one or two other individuals, and continue exploring and engaging with a "difference" that exists in their respective communities in greater depth with their partner(s).

This activity was most often followed by free-flowing discussions based on the assigned readings on "Intercultural Communication". In some groups, students started defining culture according to their contexts and moved to stating linguistic barriers to communication, stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings, as well as the various challenges facing a cross cultural exchange. In other groups, these readings lead to discussions about both the principles and best practices of intercultural communication to better understand how they can improve and deepen the dialogue with people coming from a different culture than theirs.

Attendance & Technology Update

This past week we have witnessed a lower level of attendance than last week, and while most groups have the critical mass necessary to engage in dynamic, fruitful discussions, there have been a few groups that have been impacted by the attendance issues, and we are working on addressing these issues by reaching out directly to students to ensure their engagement and attend their sessions regularly to fully benefit from their experience. We really appreciate your support in ensuring student attendance in their sessions, and thank you for your continued efforts. If your students are on break next week, please encourage them to login remotely for their sessions, and contact our tech team if they anticipate any technical difficulties. Their attendance is crucial for their groups' dynamics and learning process, and we would be grateful if you could **please remind your students that their attendance and participation remain crucial to the group's dynamic and to making the most out of their Soliya experience.** The technical logistics in students' groups continue to improve, with a fewer students experiencing technical difficulties, more than half of which were resolved in-session.

This Week

This week we are recommending all groups do an activity entitled "Life Stories", in which we ask students to share with each other the three events that shaped their views of the world. This activity has consistently been cited as one of the high points in students' end of semester feedback, and can lead to a wide variety of follow-up conversations ranging from discussions on how students' political views have been impacted by personal experiences, to explorations of the effect family members have on shaping students' perspectives. Some groups, particularly those that will be impacted by attendance issues due to university holidays this week, will do the Life Stories activity later in the semester, and will focus on digging deeper into students' topics of choice this week