

## Network to Work Meeting – February 2020

### ACTIVITY – CONNECTING WITH ANOTHER THROUGH CONVERSATION AND GOOD LISTENING

#### ***Introduction:***

“Being a good networker involves being a good listener and engaging in conversations in a way that lets you learn about and connect with the other person. Generally, people tend to listen at a superficial level. We hear the words while thinking about either our response or how the words relate to our own lives and stories. The tendency is to respond by sharing our own similar experience or by asking “yes or no” questions. Neither of these conversational approaches is the most effective way to form a genuine connection.

Being a good listener and conversationalist involves certain specific skills – the ability to keep the focus on what the other person is saying (as opposed to what we are thinking), as well as the ability to be curious and keep the conversation going by asking open ended questions (vs. yes or no questions).

One of the characteristics of an effective networker is that they ask good questions. One question that can be helpful in striking up a conversation in a networking situation is this one:

***“What do you enjoy doing outside of work?”***

In this activity, we going to have you conduct a series of brief conversations with each other that each start with this question. This will allow you to practice having a networking conversation while also practicing being a good listener.

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#### ***Instructions:***

- Form two lines (line 1 and line 2) facing each other;
- Pair off with the person opposite you;
- Your goal is to create a comfortable, positive interaction by practicing having a conversation stemming from this question.
- There will be 4 rounds of conversation; each will last 3 minutes.

- In the **first round**:
    - **Each participant in Line 1 starts** by asking the other person, “*What do you enjoy doing outside of work?*”.
    - **The opposing participant in Line 2 will respond.**
    - **The Line 1 participant** tries to learn as much as possible about the other individual’s interests outside of work, using curiosity.
    - **TIPS:**
      - Try to limit talking about your own similar interests.
      - Try to avoid “yes / no” questions.
      - Ask curious questions to keep the conversation going and to demonstrate genuine interest in the other person. *Some examples:*
        1. How is it for you to (pursue this activity?)
        2. What makes it fun for you?
        3. How are you able to incorporate that into your busy work life?
        4. Tell me more about it.
        5. What got you into doing this?
        6. What have been some of your most noteworthy memories or experiences while doing this?
  - Continue through 4 rounds, each time alternating which line starts the conversation.
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**Debrief:**

- How much were you able to learn in 3 minutes?
- How difficult was it to keep the focus on the other person?
- What were the conversations like? How did they feel?
- How did it feel to have someone keep the focus more on you than on him- or herself?
- Did it get easier as you spoke with more people?
- Did you notice that it was easier to connect with some people over others?
- What made it easier or more difficult?