Make Me the Leader

Materials:
Index cards, markers, and tape.

Time:
25 minutes

Instructions:
Write one phrase on each card:

- Make me the Leader
- Ignore me
- Laugh at everything I say
- Stare at me
- Disagree with me.

Give each student an index card face down in front of them.

Assign the students a problem to solve in small groups (of 4 or 5).

Examples of a Problem:

-One of the Students suspects their roommate of stealing from them, how are they going to approach the roommate?

-There is a big test coming up in math and you need to study but you don’t know what to study, your roommate is always loud in your room, and you really want to go to the movies tonight instead of studying. What should you do?

Tell them they will have ten minutes to discuss it, and then have them place their index cards on their foreheads.

***Do not let them see what the card says***

Watch as they try to accomplish their task and are completely distracted by their cards.

Next, have the students remove their cards and continue their discussion. Give them another ten minutes and then debrief.
Debriefing:

How did it feel when the others were not listening to you, but rather paying attention to the label? Were you able to accomplish anything with the labels on? Did you figure out what your card said before you looked at it?

This activity gives students an understanding of how it feels to be "labeled" and how sometimes others are only concerned with what is obvious.

Note:

It is important to tell the group to respond to the label on the card but also to attempt the task.

Other labels you can play with include: "I might get violent", "I'm dishonest", "I need help", "I'm slow", "I'm confused", “you can trust me", there is no limit to the options. It is also a nice balance to have both "positive" and "negative" labels. Having both labels likely raises even greater discussion afterward. This activity works very well as a fishbowl and can be used to explore group dynamics.

Usually people begin to take on the labels, that is if the label is “ignore me” the person either withdraws or tries very hard to get attention. It is important to provide time to bring the participants out of the labels. Many of these labels can be too close to home for the participants. It is important to remind them that they are not the labels.

Variation:

(Prejudice)

Make up index cards that have descriptions of different types of people. Could cover race, religion, disabilities, whatever you come up with. Each person has an index card placed on his or her back and they don’t know what they have been labeled with. Each person has to guess what their label is by the way others act towards them.

Process afterwards by talking about how others acted in stereotypical ways and the need for individuals to be aware of the stereotypes and prejudices they have.