"I Matter" Activity

This activity is meant to connect participants to the emotional impact of a youth-adult partnership by drawing upon their own life experiences. It's a great opening activity for a larger retreat event.

Setup:

You'll need some large pieces of paper, markers, sticky notes or index cards and writing utensils.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Start by giving some context to the activity:
    - The human desire to feel valued and have a sense that they matter in the world is universal and cross-generational. It is the essence of why the youth-adult partnership paradigm shift is so powerful and needed. This activity draws upon participants' personal experiences. It asks them to recall incidents where their input or voice was either solicited and valued in a decision impacting their lives - or not. The feelings elicited in both scenarios are identified individually and named as a group. These attributes are then related to their school culture, creating an awareness of the degree of alignment with these principles.
2. Ask participants to:
    - Think of a time when some decision was being made that would directly impact you, but you were not asked for input. You knew you had important information to share about this decision, but there was no opportunity for you to contribute. You knew this would result in an action that was being done "to" or "for" you - but definitely not "with" you. Spend a 1 minute writing down notes about this incident, recalling it as vividly as possible. WRITE OR DRAW
3. Have participants turn and talk to somebody around them. Ask them to leave out details and focus on identifying feeling words/emotions they felt in that moment.
4. Now, ask participants to:
    - Think of a time when some decision was being made that would directly impact you, and your input was actively solicited. You knew you had important information to contribute to the decision. You knew this would result in an action that was being done "with" you rather than "to" or "for" you. Spend 1 minute writing down notes or thinking about this incident, recalling it as vividly as possible. WRITE OR DRAW
5. Have participants turn and talk again. Again, they should focus on identifying feeling words/emotions they felt in the moment.
6. Have the group share 1-3 feeling words. You can popcorn these or go around in a circle to hear from everyone.
7. Create a word cloud with these afterwards while they are sharing their words for the second prompt, or write them on a large piece of paper for everyone to see.

8. Invite participants to gather around the list of words and explain:
    - This is at the heart of the WHY of partnership — provoking those feelings (left hand column) when you know your voice matters allows people to be their best selves — to live into their full potential. Our job is to continually create the context that allows this to happen. When engaging in this space, remember those emotions that people feel when their input is actively sought for and valued.



TIP: *If you want to save time, you can go directly to making Group Agreements using these value words as a starting point!*