

## Walking in Their Shoes

Purpose: This exercise is designed to help a group develop empathy with people they need to build relationships with and who have differing or opposing perspectives. Empathy will help the group to see how to relate to them and to have realistic expectations of them

Time: 45 minutes

Preparation: Explain that this is a role play in pairs between a campaigner and someone they need to confront or persuade as part of their campaign.

Description: Divide everyone in the group into pairs. Ask person-A to take on the character of a particular person whom s/he is going to have to confront or relate to in some way. If the person is an unknown representative of a government or organisation, they will need to use their imagination. Person-B is the campaigner who has made an appointment to meet person-A.

Ask each pair to decide together 1) who they are, 2) the issue under discussion and maybe 3) the setting for the meeting. Give both the set of questions (below) that B is going to ask A, or write them up on a flip chart for all to see. Give a few moments for A to think him/herself into their role and become the person. It might help to close their eyes to picture her or him, or to imitate her or him. B then asks the following questions in turn and A answers them aloud in role:

- *What is your position and what are your responsibilities?*
- *What is your life like? What really matters to you?*
- *What is your perspective on the issue in question?*
- *What are you afraid might happen?*
- *What pressures and expectations are operating in your life?*
- *How are you likely to perceive this lobby group or person who wants to influence you?*
- *What are constraints on your co-operating with them?*

### Wrap-up:

De-role by asking each pair to look in each other's eyes, say each other's name and shake hands/hug. It is important to reflect on what clues have been learnt from this exercise. Questions to ask might be:

- What will help you approach the person constructively?
- What attitude and form of questioning will be helpful in gaining respect and co-operation?

It is also important for people to step back into their own shoes and share what they have learnt about themselves.