

HF Workshop: The Redundancia Simulation

WHAT IS REDUNDANCIA?

The Redundancia Simulation was designed to “increase empathy for and enhance the productivity of people from different linguistic backgrounds.” (Facilitator’s Guide, Nipporica Associates LLC) According to the simulation’s developers, ...”oral communication between a speaker and listener is one of the most basic method of sharing information and developing relationships....Communication often breaks down between people who are native speakers...and when one is a non-native speaker the potential for miscommunication is multiplied.”

Every day in the work we do, we see that the ability to communicate effectively across cultures is critical for a successful relationship between a HF and AP and for us as CCs with our APs.

This simulation teaches the participants a simple, new language. During the simulation, participants have the opportunity to experience and de-brief (review thoughts, feelings, observations, behaviors, perceptions, reactions) 3 different roles: speaker of a second language, listener to that speaker and an observer. The speaker is asked to use the new language to express a common occurrence; the listener is advised to listen attentively in an attempt to fully understand what is being said and to encourage the speaker. The observer oversees the communication attempt making sure the speaker uses the Redundancia language. Each role is in play for 3 minutes, and after everyone has had the opportunity to “play” each role, the simulation ends and the de-brief, lead by the facilitator, begins. The de-brief can last for 15 minutes, an hour, or more depending on the interests of the group. It is a time of insight and understanding. Let’s say, “the light bulb goes on!”

IS THERE VALUE LEARNING TO FACILITATE REDUNDANCIA AND USE IT AS A HF WORKSHOP?

I think there is tremendous value in having HFs and CCs participate in the Redundancia Simulation.

Participants experience one of the many stumbling blocks for au pairs and their host families. They experience the AP’s experience and learn to identify common reactions and judgments.

We know that the ability to communicate effectively across cultures is critical for a successful relationship, but how many of us know that au pairs often feel isolated, inadequate, stressed and frustrated due to their limited experience with English? We may say, “Well, the HFs are skyping now; they must be able to



assess the language level.” Not so. It’s much more difficult to communicate “in the moment,” when there are so many distractions and when under the stress of being in a new culture.

Did you know that ‘culture shock’ is also called ‘culture fatigue?’ “I’m tired of living in a strange country, tired of watching behavior I don’t understand, tired of eating strange foods, and very tired of having to speak and understand a strange language.” It’s exhausting.

Communication is so much more than the words we use; it includes body language, gestures, facial expression, intonation and stress patterns. All these aspects contribute to meaning and reflect personality, enthusiasm, knowledge. If an au pair is focused on vocabulary and grammar, she may lose her train of thought and fail to connect with the listener. She may appear uncomfortable, unsure and uninformed. She will fail to communicate with “flair!” It’s not uncommon for the speaker’s intelligence and competence to be judged (not favorably) by their language ability. I wonder how competent we’d appear if thrust into China or Thailand....

The de-brief allows us to take a look at what behaviors support communication and which detract from it. We learn how our actions help or hinder our au pairs. We experience the importance of not jumping to conclusions regarding an AP’s ability, love of children or commitment to the job. We won’t see the “real” au pair until she’s less stressed about her ability to communicate effectively in English.

This simulation allows participants to experience what it’s like to have communication efforts thwarted for 3 minutes. We quickly realize that it was 3 minutes of frustration for us; it’s almost 24/7 for our newly arrived au pairs!

HOW DO I DO REDUNDANCIA?

In order to effectively present this simulation to an audience, I recommend ordering the Redundancia Facilitator’s Guide and reading it thoroughly.

