

Exercise: Yes

Description of Exercise

Up to 16 participants stand in a circle. Person One makes eye contact with anyone around the circle (Person Two), and then says Person Two's name. Person Two may only respond, "yes," giving Person One permission to slowly move into Person Two's position. While Person One is moving into Person Two's position, Person Two will make eye contact with anyone else around the circle (Person Three), say Person Three's name, and Person Three will respond, "yes." And so on.

Inquiry Strategy

At the conclusion of the first round (every participant moves at least once), ask participants about the challenges of this exercise. Listen for awareness that people tend to move before fully listening for the "yes." Ask how this tendency plays out in the workplace. Ask how this tendency may impact work relationships.

The facilitator may wish to perform a second round of this exercise, during which time the facilitator can encourage participants to increase the speed by which they perform the exercise. At the conclusion of round two, ask participants what strategies they employed to ensure their feet stayed firmly planted until they heard the "yes." Ask how these strategies can be used in the workplace.

Exercise: Red Ball

Description of Exercise

Up to 16 participants stand or sit in a circle. Person One makes eye contact with anyone around the circle (Person Two), announces "Red Ball", then passes an imaginary ball (size and weight of a basketball) with a chest pass. Person Two receives the ball, says, "Thank you, Red Ball," makes eye contact with another person around the circle (Person Three), and repeats process.

Once mastered, the facilitator will introduce a second ball, Green Ball (size and weight of a ping pall ball and is passed underhand), which will be simultaneously passed with the Red Ball. Note, two balls will be passed the same time; however, both balls do not need to be passed together.

Once round two has been mastered, the facilitator will introduce a third ball, Grey Ball (size and weight of a bowling ball and is rolled on the floor), which will be simultaneously passed with the Red Ball and Green Ball. At times, participants may end up with multiple balls at the same time. This is perfectly acceptable, and the multiple balls can be passed to separate individuals.

Inquiry Strategy

At the conclusion of the first round of "Red Ball" being passed (before another ball is introduced), ask participants about how easy it was to "receive" the red ball. Probe for the importance of eye contact for both sender and receiver in passing the ball. Ask how

this relates to communication, specifically the sending and receiving of messages. Point out if participants seem to hesitate when receiving or passing the ball and encourage them to heighten awareness so that they can keep the ball moving.

After the “Green Ball” and the “Grey Ball” are added, ask about the challenges of having simultaneous balls circulating. Probe for the difficulty of having multiple “projects” to juggle. Ask how participants kept their focus. Ask how participants dealt with distractions. Probe for how these strategies relate to the workplace, particularly in team projects and in communication.

Exercise: Group Storytelling

Description of Exercise

Up to 12 participants stand in a circle. The facilitator will provide the name of the main character and a simple activity the character performed. Person One will turn to the left, make eye contact with the Person Two, and provide the first sentence in the story. Person Two will respond with, “yes,” to Person One, turn to Person Three, start with, “and,” and provide the second sentence in the story. Person Three will respond with, “yes,” to Person Two, turn to Person Four, start with, “and,” and provide the third sentence in the story. And so on.

The facilitator will end the exercise on a high note in the story, and after every participant has contributed at least one line to the story.

Inquiry Strategy

At the conclusion of the exercise, ask participants about challenges to telling a group story. Probe for difficulty in refraining from individual agendas and “steering” the story to achieve an individual storyline. Ask participants for challenges preventing them from remaining fully present and actively listening to others.

Point out that starting each sentence with “yes,” is an immediate acknowledgement of the previous participant’s contribution. Point out that “and,” allows participants to then add their own unique perspective.

Ask participants how Group Storytelling might strengthen collaboration in the workplace. Point out that in this exercise, an environmental of equality in conversational turn-taking was created, where every participant had approximately the same opportunity to contribute. Ask how teams can create greater equality in turn-taking.

Point out that this exercise had shared vision among participants. Ask participants for times in the workplace when a team may have multiple leaders. Direct participants to reflect on how they felt knowing their contribution would be supported by the entire group, and how this can be translated in the workplace. Ask participants how “yes,” might look in an organization, particularly in group-decision making processes or brainstorming processes.



Exercise: Remember the Time

Description of Exercise

Two participants face one another. The facilitator will provide a simple activity that one of the participants performed. Person One will make eye contact with Person Two, and provide the first sentence in the memory, beginning with, “Do you remember the time,” and complete the question with the memory. Person Two will respond with, “yes, and I,” adding the next part of the memory. Person One will then respond with, “yes, and you,” adding the next part of the memory. And so on.

The facilitator will end the exercise on a high note in the story.

The key to this exercise is the story is about Person Two. Person One simply helps Person Two recall the story by using the phrase, “yes, and you,” and Person Two simply adds to the memory by using the phrase, “yes, and I.”

Inquiry Strategy

At the conclusion of the exercise, ask Person One how it felt to focus all communication on Person Two. Ask Person Two how it felt to be the focus of all communication from Person One. Probe for how Person One helped Person Two in the recollection of the story. Ask participants for barriers that made focusing on Person Two difficult.

Ask participants how Remember the Time might strengthen communication in the workplace. Probe for types of communication that can benefit from a “yes, and I,” or “yes, and you,” mindset. Direct participants to reflect on how a “yes, and” perspective impacts conversations.

Exercises: Ad Agency and Cafeteria

Description of Ad Agency Exercise

Up to 8 participants stand in a circle. The facilitator will provide a simple category and ask participants to brainstorm items for the category. For example, the category can be, “Household decorations that serve dual purpose.” One participant goes into the center of the circle, pitch their idea, and everyone around the circle cheers for the idea. An example of an item in this category might be, “A doorstop made out of a slice of wedding cake!” The participant returns to the circle, and a second participant goes into the center of the circle, pitch their idea, and everyone cheers, again. And so on.

This is a quick brainstorming exercise. The facilitator should encourage “popcorn” responses, free from self-judgment, and free from judgement from others. As participants enter the center of the circle to make their idea pitch, encourage them to make eye contact with others around the circle, and to give their pitch with confidence. The facilitator should also encourage cheering for all ideas. The brainstorm ends when all participants make at least one contribution. The facilitator then selects a new category for participants to brainstorm.



Description of Cafeteria Exercise

Following Ad Agency, the 8 participants continue to stand in a circle. The facilitator will name a food item to inspire this exercise. Person One will go first and make a small comment about the cafeteria food item, pretending to address the cafeteria manager. For example, “The French Fries today are superb! I can tell you used organic potatoes.” Person Two will then “heighten” the statement. Person Two may say, for example, “The French Fries are superb. I love the organic potatoes you used, sprinkled with pink Himalayan salt.” Each subsequent participant heightens the immediate previous statement. And so on.

This exercise is about heightening, which is simply to take one concept and to slowly increase in intensity the concept. Encourage participants to honor the original statement, and all previous statements, while ensuring subsequently participants have plenty of opportunity to increase the intensity of statements. The exercise ends when Person One goes a second time.

Inquiry Strategy

At the conclusion of Ad Agency exercise, ask participants what factors contributed to their success in brainstorming. Ask participants what factors hindered their brainstorming. Probe participants for the impact cheering makes to the brainstorming process. Ask participants what their inner critic or inner cheerleader was saying, if anything, during this exercise.

At the conclusion of Cafeteria, ask participants what factors contributed to their success in heightening the previous statement. Ask participants what factors hindered their ability to heighten the previous statement. Probe participants on the difficulty they experienced, if at all, on focusing on one concept to heighten.

Ask participants how the two exercises differ in problem solving, pointing out that one exercise focuses on generation of many ideas (divergent thinking), while the other focuses on the deep and full exploration of one idea (convergent thinking). Probe for times when divergent thinking and convergent thinking are best used concurrently. Probe for times when divergent thinking and convergent thinking are best used sequentially.

Exercise: The Martha Game

Description of Exercise

Up to 16 participants form a circle. Person One will enter the center of the circle, announce, “I’m a _____,” choose an object to be, and then take on the physicality of the object. Person Two will join the center, announce, “I’m a _____,” choose to be a new object that might be found with the first object, and take on the physicality of the second object. Person Three will join the center, announce, “I’m a _____,” choose to be a new object that might be found with the first and second objects, and take on the physicality of the third object.



Once three are in the center, Person One selects either Person Two or Person Three to stay. Person One and the other person not selected will return to the circle. The remaining person will now start by being the exact same previous object, still announcing “I’m a ____.” Two others will join. And so on.

Inquiry Strategy

Point out that when participants took on the physicality of an object, they got a lot of laughs, because it is always fun to see an adult pretend to be an object. When two others joined, the stage picture became more complete, which is the concept of synergy. Ask how synergy relates to the workplace. Ask how collaboration supports synergy. Probe for how synergy changes, usually in a positive manner, group dynamics. A specific probe may include how synergy allows all to feel supported.

Exercise: Eight-Line Story Structure

Description of Exercise

Eight participants form a circle to tell a story together, one sentence at a time, and using the following structure:

1. Once upon a time...
2. And everyday...
3. But one day...
4. And because of that...
5. And because of that...
6. And because of that...
7. Until finally...
8. And ever since that day...

Steps 1 and 2 paint a current situation. Step 3 is the first turning point, where a new situation breaks the current situation. Steps 4, 5 and 6 contrast the new situation and create the opportunities for change. Step 7 creates the second turning point, where resolution occurs. And Step 8 is the learning lesson.

The facilitator may wish to illustrate with:

1. Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Dorothy who lived on a farm in rural Kansas.
2. And every day, she performed her chores while longing for a different life, and singing about rainbows and a more perfect word.
3. But one day, she was caught in a tornado.
4. And because of that, she was transported to a new and unknown land.
5. And because of that, she met new friends, including a scarecrow, a lion, and a tin man.
6. And because of that, she and her new friends traveled to the Emerald City to meet a wizard who promised to grant all of their wishes.
7. Until finally, Dorothy clicked her heels three times and returned to Kansas.
8. And ever since then, Dorothy realized that home is where the heart is, with her family and friends.

For the first round, the facilitator has participants use the 8-line structure to tell a familiar story that all participants know. Common stories include fairy tales, fables and Disney movies.

For the second round, the facilitator has participants use the 8-line structure to tell the story from the first round, this time from the perspective of another character.

Inquiry Strategy

At the conclusion of this exercise, ask participants how using the eight-line structure impacted their storytelling. Ask how turning point is used to move a story forward. Point out that in this story structure, there are actually two turning points: the first turning point changes the current situation which leads to disruption, and the second turning point where resolution is achieved.

Ask participants what improv skills they used to tell a group story. Probe for how “yes, and” creates a culture where all ideas are valued. Ask participants about how difficult it was to not control the outcome of the scene. Ask how this might apply in the work place, and how teamwork might be different if the leadership role is shared by all instead of just one.

Ask participants how this story structure might be used in the workplace. Point out that storytelling is often used to coach employees, strengthening the values and expectations of the organization through narrative and illustration.

Specific to the second round where storytellers are asked to recount a commonly known story from a perspective of another character, ask participants how they derived their viewpoint. Ask participants how this might relate to the workplace, probing for how situations can be seen very differently depending on viewpoint.

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