

Jolts!

33 Brief Activities To Explore Diversity and Inclusion

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the thiagi group
improving performance playfully

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Introduction

Here's a brief description of one of my favorite jolts, called *Clock on the Ceiling*. This is the DIY version of this jolt. Read and follow these instructions:

Stand up, extend your right hand, and point your index finger toward a large imaginary clock embedded flat on the ceiling.

1. *Circle your finger around the imaginary clock in the clockwise direction. Continue circling your finger several times—always in the clockwise direction.*
2. *Keep your finger pointing to the ceiling and circling in the clockwise direction while you bend your elbow and lower the hand until your index finger (still rotating) comes below your shoulder level.*
3. *Now look at the direction in which your finger is rotating. Still in the clockwise direction?*

Please put the book down and perform the activity.

If you followed the instructions and completed the task, you are in for a surprise. Your finger will end up rotating in the counterclockwise direction. If you are still skeptical, repeat the activity.

What Is a Jolt?

Now that you have experienced a jolt, here is our official definition:

A jolt is an experiential learning activity that lasts for a brief period of time and illustrates one or more important learning points.

Visit [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for *thiagi jolts*. You will see a collection of video jolts.

Here are some important points about jolts:

- **Jolts last for a very short period.** The *Clock on the Ceiling* jolt that you experienced usually lasts for a minute and half. Some jolts may last for less than a minute. According to our standards, no jolt can require more than 5 minutes.
- **Jolts provide participants with insights rather than skills.** They startle the participants into re-examining their assumptions and revising their habitual behaviors.
- **Jolts produce emotional effects.** Some jolts produce feelings of discomfort or elation; all jolts result in aha moments.

- **Some jolts require interaction among participants.** All jolts require *introspection* on the part of individuals.
- **All jolts must be followed up by a debriefing.** This process involves explanations from the facilitator and discussions among the participants. Going back to the *Clock on the Ceiling*, here is the main learning point that we want to bring out:

It all depends on your perspective. The same behavior appears radically different, depending on your point of view.

When to Use a Jolt

Here are some suggestions about when to use jolts:

- **Use jolts to increase self-awareness.** For example, use them to help participants examine their stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions as a part of a training session on diversity, sexual harassment, change management, customer focus, or creative problem solving.
- **Begin the training session with a jolt** to capture participants' attention. Treat the rest of the training session as an extended debriefing discussion.
- **Schedule a jolt as a segue** between one training topic and the next.
- **Use a jolt to energize** the participants after a lunch break.
- **Use a jolt as a final activity** to remind participants that in spite of everything they learned, they may still revert to their habitual behavior patterns.
- **Use jolts to emphasize the difference** between intellectually knowing what to do and emotionally being able to do it.
- **Use jolts to vary the pace.** If you are making lengthy presentations of technical content, intersperse a few jolts in-between to illustrate key principles and critical issues.
- **Use jolts to anchor a lecture.** Begin with an appropriate jolt, and use the debriefing discussion to present your content.
- **Use jolts to highlight key aspects** of learning and application. You can use a jolt to illustrate effective learning techniques or to emphasize the importance of follow up activities.

How to Conduct a Jolt

Here are some suggestions for achieving maximum learning outcomes:

Before the Session

- **Be sure that you are using jolts for a legitimate reason**—not just for the sake of including an interesting activity.
- **Check your motivation.** Make sure that you are not using jolts to make your participants feel silly. Adjust your attitude to focus on mindful learning.
- **Avoid overuse of jolts.** The impact of jolts wear off if you use too many of them in the same training session. Too many jolts may irritate the participants.
- **Set aside plenty of time for debriefing.** Jolts are useless – and sometimes even dangerously misleading – without a thorough debriefing discussion. Remember, real learning comes from debriefing, and debriefing requires time.

During the Session

- **Use a rapid pace to conduct the jolt.** But do the activity in a deliberate fashion.
- **Consider using a vicarious approach.** If you are working with a new group and have not yet earned sufficient trust from the participants, tell them a story about what happened when you used the jolt with a previous group. Do this instead of conducting the jolt.

After the Session

- **Defuse and decompress.** Acknowledge participants' emotional reactions. Don't take their comments as personal attacks. Defuse hostility by apologizing for any entrapment and explaining your rationale.
- **Conduct a debriefing discussion.** Use a structured approach – but without squelching spontaneous comments.

Jolt 1

Alliances

The realities of the global workplace often require temporary alliances among different individuals and even different organizations. This serial jolt (which is played in two rounds) explores the nature of negotiation and coalition formation.



Synopsis

Participants are asked to form asset coalitions with other participants under a strict time limit. The numbers displayed on a standard deck of playing cards (2, 3, 4, 5 ...) provide the initial asset base of each participant; the facilitator randomly distributes the cards at the start of the activity. Participants who successfully form a coalition team with total assets that exceed a predetermined amount are allowed to divide the profits.



Purpose

- To explore the formation and dynamics of temporary alliances.



Training Topics

- Teamwork
- Cooperation



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number, you may divide larger groups of participants into play groups of three to six.

Best: 5



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 7 to 15 minutes for the debriefing.



Supplies

- A set of five playing cards (Ace, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of any suit) for each group (Ace counts as the number “1”)



Equipment

- Timer
- Whistle



Flow

Brief the participants. Shuffle the packet of cards face down and give a card to each participant. Ask the participants to show the cards to each other. Explain that each participant is the CEO of a major corporation and that the number on the card represents the total assets of the corporation he or she now leads.

Announce the request for a bid. Explain that each participant must form a coalition with the other CEO participants to create coalitions with a total asset worth of at least 8. Note that forming this coalition is necessary in order to bid on a profitable major multinational project and that if this coalition building with the other CEOs is successful, the project will yield a guaranteed profit of \$16 million.

Emphasize two requirements. Note that the total coalition assets to win the bid must exceed 8 (as represented by the total point values of the playing cards). Let the participants know as well that the corporations forming the coalition must agree on how to divide the \$16 million profit among the coalition members.

Encourage negotiations. Since there are different ways of forming a coalition that meet or exceed the required asset total of 8, encourage players to negotiate with one another to maximize their personal share of the profit.

Conduct the activity. Announce a time limit of 3 minutes and set the timer. Begin the activity. If a group of participants reports to you that they have completed the activity, make sure that the group has total assets of 8 and a formula for dividing the \$16 million profit. Ask the participants who have completed the activity to write down their share of the \$16 million on a piece of paper. Blow your whistle at the end of 3 minutes to conclude the negotiation period.

Conduct the second round. Collect and shuffle the playing cards used in the first round and redistribute the cards to the participants. Explain that global economic conditions have changed and that the profit potential is greater. Explain that the profits guarantee is now \$20 million. Give participants a 2-minute time limit for forming new alliances. Play the game as before and conclude it after 2 minutes.



Debriefing

Conduct a debriefing discussion. Tell the participants that you would like to conduct a debriefing discussion. Use questions such as the following:

- *How did it feel to be a member of a successful coalition? How did it feel to not be included in a successful coalition?*
- *What were the behavior similarities and differences during the two rounds?*
- *Did the first round behaviors affect behaviors during the second round?*
- *How did the members of the alliance divide the profit?*
- *Did your reputation from the first round impact how others behaved toward you during the second round?*
- *How does this game reflect events that have occurred in your workplace?*
- *What might have happened if every corporation formed had the same assets?*
- *What might have happened if we played one more round?*



Learning Points

1. What happened between the participants in the first round had a direct impact on what happened in the subsequent rounds of the activity.
2. Those participants who were in some way excluded during the first round of the play will likely try to exclude others in the second round.
3. Business goals and relationship goals frequently clash with each other.



Variation

What if you don't have playing cards? If playing cards are not available, then use small, card-sized pieces of paper and write the numbers 1 through 5 in the available space.

Jolt 2

Au Contraire

Very often when people learn something new, they assume they knew it all along. This way of thinking is called the hindsight bias. Here's a jolt that demonstrates this bias.



Synopsis

Supply proverbs that contradict each other. Ask the participants to come up with examples and explanations to prove that the proverb that they received presents an obvious truth.



Purpose

- To explore hindsight bias.



Training Topics

- Values and beliefs
- Intercultural communication
- Cognitive biases
- Confirmation bias



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 3 minutes for the debriefing.



Supplies

- Proverb cards, one card for each player (see *Preparation* section below)



Equipment

- Whistle
- Countdown timer



Preparation

Prepare proverb cards. Select a pair of proverbs that contradict each other. Here are some examples:

- Look before you leap.
He who hesitates is lost.
- Hitch your wagon to a star.
Don't bite off more than you can chew.
- A stitch in time saves nine.
If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
Out of sight, out of mind.
- Birds of a feather flock together.
Opposites attract.

Write one of the proverbs on a card, and write the contradicting proverb on another card. Repeat this process, alternating between each pair of proverbs, until you have enough cards to give one to each participant.



Flow

Distribute proverb cards. Give one card to each participant. Make sure that equal numbers of participants receive one of the two proverbs that contradict each other.

Explain the task. Ask each participant to read the proverb on his or her card and think of examples and explanations that would support the proverb. Announce a 2-minute time limit for this independent activity.

Ask participants to present their thoughts. At the end of 2 minutes, blow the whistle. Read one of the two proverbs and invite any participant to present suitable examples and explanations to prove that the proverb contains an obvious piece of truth.

Repeat the process with the opposing proverb. Read the other proverb that contradicts the previous one. As before, ask a volunteer to share examples and explanations in support of this proverb.

Ask for more examples. Invite the participants to present more examples and explanations in support of either proverb.



Debriefing

Point out that the two proverbs contradict each other. Explain that logical thinking would lead us to conclude that both cannot be valid at the same time.

Explain hindsight bias. Suggest that once we accept a principle, we feel that we knew it all along.

Discuss situational validity. Present this statement from Niels Bohr: *The opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.* Discuss how it is possible for two contradictory principles to be valid under different contexts.

Invite more examples. Ask the participants to share other pairs of proverbs that contradict each other.



Learning Points

1. When people accept a statement, they have no difficulty coming up with supporting evidence.
2. The opposite of a profound truth can also be another profound truth. We need to have an open mind to accept both perspectives.



More...

- For a fascinating review of all types of cognitive biases (including the hindsight bias), visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases.
- Locate lists of proverbs from 100 countries and cultures: <http://creativeproverbs.com/cp-index.htm>.

Jolt 3

Birds of a Feather

People generally tend to team up with others who share common characteristics. This jolt illustrates how diverse teams have access to more resources and produce a greater variety of solutions.



Synopsis

Each person is given an index card with a letter on it, and then asked to form a team of five people. Participants assume that they should form teams with people who have the same letter. However, when the facilitator asks them to form as many words as possible with the letter cards, they realize that it would have been more beneficial to form a diverse team.



Purpose

- To increase productivity and creativity by forming diverse teams.



Training Topics

- Diversity
- Productivity
- Teamwork



Participants

Minimum: 15

Maximum: 50

Best: 20 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- Whistle
- Prepared index cards



Preparation

On one side of an index card write the letter “T.” On the next index card write the letter “E.” On the next card write the letter “A.” On the next card write the letter “M.” On the next card write the letter “S.” Repeat the process so that each participant will have a card with one of the five letters.



Flow

Distribute the cards. Give each participant an index card with a letter.

Organize teams. Ask the participants to form teams of five people as quickly as possible. Most participants will form teams with people who have the same letter.

Give additional instructions. Ask the participants to form the longest possible words with the letters on the index cards from each team member.



Debriefing

Explain the situation. Point out that the teams that have participants with index cards of the same letter are not able to spell any words (except “A”). Explain that if the participants had formed themselves into teams with different letters they would have been able to spell the word TEAMS.

Relate to the workplace. Ask the participants to reflect on different workplace teams and decide whether they are deliberately maximizing and leveraging diversity among members.



Learning Points

1. People with diverse characteristics and resources form more productive teams.
2. Because diverse teams provide a greater variety of solutions, they are more likely to create positive outcomes in the workplace.



Variations

Want to increase the relevance? Distribute letter cards that will spell out the name of the corporation or a product it manufactures.



Follow-Up

Ask the participants to put away the letter cards and reorganize themselves into teams of five, trying to maximize existing aspects of diversity.

Jolt 4

By the Numbers

The need to be correct appears to be a universal human need and this foible of human nature is incorporated in this jolt. We use this jolt frequently in our training sessions on diversity and inclusion. It makes participants aware of the insidious nature of stereotyping and prejudice. A unique feature of this jolt is the debriefing discussion inserted in the middle of the activity.



Synopsis

Participants are presented with sets of numbers and asked to find the sequencing or order patterns in the number sets. The facilitator asks the participants to suggest their own number sets that follow the same sequencing order and pattern. The learning turns on the participants suggesting number sets based on wrong assumptions and faulty reasoning.



Purpose

- To explore the limitations of inductive thinking.



Training Topics

- Critical thinking
- Stereotyping



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number



Time

- 5 to 15 minutes for the activity, 5 to 15 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- A flip chart (optional). This may be handy to write down the sets of numbers called out by the participants.



Caution

Note that an element of entrapment is inherent in your choice of the initial number sets. You might be accused of setting the class up to fail or to look stupid. Don't get defensive. Just acknowledge the complaint and explain that the purpose of the deception was to highlight the learning point. We suggest that you go easy on the "nagging" part of the activity (below) if participants appear to be truly upset.



Flow

Brief the participants. Tell the participants that you will present sets of three numbers and emphasize the importance of listening carefully to your instructions. Point out that the participants' job is to find the recurring pattern among the three numbers in each set. Present these four sample number sets:

Set A: 3 – 6 – 7

Set B: 14 – 28 – 29

Set C: 5 – 10 – 11

Set D: 2 – 4 – 5

Invite participation. Most players will solve the problem immediately and grin knowingly. Other participants may shout out their solutions to the number challenge. Without providing the correct answer, repeat the instructions and ask everyone to listen carefully. Challenge the participants to supply new number sets with a similar pattern as those you've displayed and say that you will accept or reject each suggestion made with a simple "yes" or "no."

Provide feedback. Our experience is that players will give you additional number sets they are absolutely confident are correct; A participant might offer the number (4), then double it (8), and then finish with the number (9), which is one more than the second number. Actually, the pattern you established in the example is any three numbers in ascending order (for example, 5, 6, 7). Listen to each set suggestion provided by the participants and provide a simple answer of "yes" or "no."

Nag the players. After verifying and accepting a few suggested number sets, ask the players how they feel. Comment on the smug look on most faces. Here is some suggested dialogue that you can put in your own words:

Many of you are falling into the trap of confirmation bias. You think you have figured out the pattern that links the number sets. You immediately started proving your hypothesis by offering number sets that fit the pattern you thought was correct. You felt happy whenever your number set got a

“Yes” and so offered more number sets of the same type and enjoyed a feeling of being smart and superior. You were very careful not to present any number set that might get a “No” so that no one would consider you stupid.

A true scientist, however, keeps an open mind and is not so self-assured and works to disprove an initial hypothesis. If you were following this methodology, you would have offered me some number sets that you “know” to be incorrect.

Give feedback. Challenge the participants to provide new number sets and answer “Yes” or “No” according to whether or not the sets offered contain three whole numbers in ascending order. According to this requirement, these test sets would obviously receive a “Yes”:

7 – 9 – 14
10 – 20 – 2,000
8 – 6 million – 7 billion

And these test sets would receive a “No” response:

5 – 9 – 8
9 – 8 – 2001
98 – 15 – 3

Return to your nagging. Continue the activity and when a participant follows your advice on the scientific methods and receives a “No,” ask how it feels to hear the answer “No.” Explain that most people feel depressed if their hypothesis or answer is rejected. Point out again that “No” provides valuable information and that sometimes “No” is more valuable than “Yes.” Invite everyone to celebrate every “No” answer received during the activity.

Speed up the process. Explain that you are going to try out additional number sets by yourself. Use confusing sets of numbers (such as 5 – 78 – 2,365,897) and give a resounding “Yes” to each.

Explain the pattern. End the activity by inviting the players to guess the pattern you were using for your own test numbers and then reveal the pattern you used which is—*any three whole numbers in ascending sequence.*



Debriefing

Relate the experience to the human tendency toward accepting hasty generalizations and preconceived assumptions. Explain that this simple activity illustrates how we often strengthen our unjustified conclusions by applying the same rubric to every new situation and deliberately ignore information that does not fit our preconceived notions.



Learning Points

1. What we see or perceive is what we believe.
2. The human brain tends to form stereotypes.
3. We have a bias toward confirming what we know rather than rejecting what we know.
4. Without the ability to reject or modify our existing beliefs, valuable information is likely to be lost.



Variation

Numbers make your participants anxious? With some imagination, you can replace sets of three numbers with sets of other objects: For example, you can use sets of three Oscar-winning actors as your sample set with the secret category defined as any three famous people.

Jolt 5

Clock on the Ceiling

In many ways, this is an ideal jolt. It takes very little time, requires no props, gets the participants out of their chairs, delivers a powerful punch, and provides a metaphor for a variety of principles from different professional disciplines. What more can you ask for?



Synopsis

This jolt requires participants to point to an imaginary clock on the ceiling and rotate their index fingers in a clockwise direction. When asked to lower their outstretched fingers below shoulder level (while still pointing to the imaginary clock on the ceiling) the participants learn a lesson in perspective when they discover that it appears their fingers inevitably rotate in a counterclockwise direction.



Purpose

- To explore how point of view determines what you see.



Training Topics

- Leadership
- Customer service
- Diversity
- Communication



Participants

Minimum: 1 or more

Maximum: Any number. Even large numbers of people can simultaneously participate in this individual activity.



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 to 15 minutes for debriefing.



Flow

Ask participants to stand up. When the participants stand, ask them to extend their right arms and point their index fingers up toward an imaginary clock on the ceiling. Then ask the participants to lower their right hands below shoulder level by bending their elbows while still pointing their fingers to the clock on the ceiling.

Rotate the fingers around the clock. Next, ask the participants to raise their hands above their heads again and point to the 12 o'clock position on the imaginary clock. Then ask the participants to use their fingers to circle around the clock to the 3 o'clock position, then around to the 6 o'clock position, then up to the 9 o'clock position, then back to the 12 o'clock position. When the task is complete, ask the participants to continue moving their fingers in a clockwise rotation without stopping.

Ask participants to lower their hands. While the participants continue to circle the imaginary clock in a clockwise direction with their right index fingers, instruct them to keep their fingers pointed toward the ceiling and their eyes on their extended fingers as they circle around the clock. Instruct participants to slowly lower their hands so their index fingers (still rotating) come to a position below shoulder level.

Point to the direction of the rotation. Ask the following question about the rotation direction: *“What direction is your finger moving now, clockwise or counterclockwise?”* All the participants should be looking down at their rotating fingers (in contrast to looking up at their rotating fingers earlier). All the participants should clearly see a change in the direction of rotation. You can act surprised when participants report a counterclockwise rotation of their fingers.

Repeat the activity. Ask participants to raise their right hands above their heads and rotate their index fingers in a clockwise direction, then tell them to lower their hands (still pointing to the ceiling and rotating as they did before) to see if the phenomenon happens again.



Debriefing

A change of perspective. Ask participants why they think the change in direction of rotation occurred. Steer the discussion toward this conclusion:

The participants' fingers actually continued rotating in the same direction (clockwise) after their hands were lowered. What changed was the point of view.

Explain that when participants looked at their rotating fingers as they pointed toward the imaginary clock on the ceiling, the perspective was from the bottom up. Once the hands and rotating fingers were lowered below shoulder level, the point of view was from the top down. This change in perspective explains the perceived change in their finger rotation direction.

How does this relate? Continue the debriefing discussion by asking participants to identify situations in which a change of perspective results in a radical change in perception.



Learning Points

1. Our perceptions depend on our point of view.
2. By taking time to appreciate the power of perspective and its impact on perception, radically different understanding is possible.



Variation

Want to speed up the activity? Stand in the middle of the room facing one side of the room. Make a fist and rotate your right arm in front of you. Rotate your arm in front of you in a clockwise direction. Ask the participants whether your arm is moving in the clockwise direction or counterclockwise direction. Different people will respond differently depending on their position in front of you or behind your back.

Jolt 6

Closing Gibberish

If you are working with a group of multicultural participants who speak different languages, this playful jolt will deliver a major impact. Based on an improv activity, this jolt requires some acting ability and the ability to think on your feet. I frequently use *Closing Gibberish* as a review activity near the end of my training session.

In the description of this jolt, I am assuming English is the language of instruction. My apologies if you're training in some other language. You should have no difficulty making suitable adaptations.



Synopsis

Ask for volunteers who speak other languages. Present a review question and invite someone to answer it in a non-English language. Listen to the answer and provide an immediate translation for the benefit of other participants. Repeat the procedure with other questions and other volunteers. Later, transfer your linguistic prowess to other participants and invite them to translate the answers to additional questions.



Purpose

- To review key concepts from the training session.



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number

Best: 12 to 30



Time

- 5 minutes



Flow

Brief the participants. Near the end of the training session, announce playfully that you have recently acquired the amazing ability to understand any language spoken anywhere on the planet. Explain that you are going to use this ability to conduct a review of the training content.

Invite a speaker of some other language. Ask for volunteers who speak a language other than English. Select one of the volunteers and find out what language he or she speaks.

Ask a review question. Come up with an easy, open-ended question and ask this question in English.

Listen to the answer. Ask the respondent to provide a brief and accurate answer in the non-English language. Listen intently to the answer while mentally rehearsing a suitable answer that would likely be given by the responder. When this person finishes answering in the other language, immediately give a fluent answer in English, pretending to translate what the respondent said.

Repeat the question-and-answer interactions. Thank the respondent for giving such a thoughtful answer. Ask for any other volunteer who speaks a different language. If no one else is available, work with the same respondent. Ask another review question in English and “translate” the answer from the other language. Repeat this activity a few more times.

Empower volunteer translators. By this time, most participants would have caught on to what you are doing. Tell everyone that you are transferring your linguistic skills to a few others in the room. Ask anyone who feels a sudden increase in his or her linguistic intelligence to stand up.

Continue with a new question. Invite the volunteer to ask a review question in English. Ask a respondent to answer this question in some other language. When the answer is complete, ask the volunteer to translate it into English. When done, congratulate the volunteer for his or her fluent mastery of the other language.



Learning Points

1. You can guess the answers given in other languages to your questions by paying attention to the context.
2. You can fool some of the people some of the time. If you do this in a playful spirit, your audience members will enjoy your make-believe expertise.

Jolt 7

Different Similarities

As collaborators, Thiagi and his friend Tracy are very different along such factors as gender, age, skin color, national origin, and accent. It took some time and effort to discover the enormous number of hidden similarities that make them click.



Synopsis

The participants pair up with people who are as different from each other as possible. Members of each pair conduct a discussion to discover similarities between them.



Purpose

- To explore the different ways in which people are similar to each other and the impact of similarity on the way people react to each other.



Training Topics

- Diversity and inclusion
- Factors that contribute to similarities and differences
- Icebreakers
- Teamwork



Participants

Minimum: 4

Maximum: Any number

Best: 20 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Equipment

- Whistle
- Countdown timer



Flow

Help the participants get to know each other. Ask them to stand up, move around, observe the others, and have brief one-on-one chats for 45 seconds. At the end of this time period, blow the whistle and ask the participants to listen to an important announcement.

Identify the person who is the most different. Ask each participant to pair up with someone else so that the two members of the pair are as different from each other as possible. Announce a 45-second time limit to complete this task.

Debrief the experience. Blow the whistle at the end of 45 seconds and ask the members of each pair to stand near each other. Invite the participants to look around at the motley collection of dissimilar pairs and comment on the major differences. Point out that most of the differences are visible and physical, such as gender, height, clothing, hair color, and ethnicity.

Find similarities. Ask members of each pair to talk to each other and discover similarities, especially the hidden ones. Invite them to find as many similarities as possible within the next 60 seconds. Suggest that they explore such factors as age, service in armed forces, automobile ownership, birth order, educational background, family, favorite authors, favorite magazine, food preferences, health status, hobbies, home ownership, home town, language, learning style, leisure time activities, marriage status, membership in voluntary groups, musical preferences, personality type, political affiliation, professional reading preference, religion, schooling, sports, thinking style, and TV preferences.



Debriefing

Debrief the new experience. At the end of 1 minute, blow the whistle and announce that you are going to conduct another debriefing discussion. Begin by asking the participants how many similarities they discovered in the 1-minute period. Then launch the debriefing discussion with these types of questions:

- *Did you anticipate that you would find that many similarities between the two of you?*
- *How do you feel about the similarities you discovered?*
- *How do you feel about the other person?*
- *Ori Brafman and Ron Brafman claim that similarities between people help them click with each other and help them become members of the in-group. Do you agree with this statement?*
- *How would you encourage members of a team to discover their similarities?*



Learning Points

1. When we look for differences and similarities among people, we tend to focus on visible (or audible) physical characteristics rather than invisible personality types, background experiences, or personal preference.
2. There are many similarities among people who appear to be different.
3. Being able to identify similarities brings people together and helps them click.



Variations

What if your group is not diverse? Don't worry. Participants may have to work harder, but they will eventually pair up with dissimilar friends.



Reference

Brafman, O., & Brafman, R. (2011). *Click: The forces behind how we fully engage with people, work, and everything else we do*. New York: Crown Business.

Jolt 8

Diversity and Inclusion

Here's another jolt that incorporates a puzzle. We use it in our diversity and inclusion workshops to emphasize that people are different and that these differences help us become more productive.



Synopsis

Each person receives a copy of a mini Sudoku puzzle with an extra number as a clue. Participants assume that it is an individual test and try to solve it independently. The facilitator points out that if they had cooperated with each other they could have compared the different clues and quickly solved the puzzle.



Purpose

- To challenge the fallacies of assuming that everyone begins with identical resources and that all tasks have to be completed independently.



Training Topics

- Assumptions
- Cooperation
- Teamwork



Participants

Minimum: 5

Maximum: Any number

Best: 20 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 3 minutes for debriefing.



Handouts

- Simple Mini Sudoku Puzzle for each participant
- Simple Mini Sudoku Solution
- Difficult Mini Sudoku Puzzle, one copy for each participant (Each copy is slightly different from the others. For more information, see the *Preparation* section.)
- Difficult Mini Sudoku Solution, one copy for the facilitator



Supplies

- Pencils for participants
- Countdown timer
- Whistle



Preparation

Print a copy of the Simple Mini Sudoku Puzzle and learn to solve it. (Later, you will be explaining the procedure to the participants.)

Prepare copies of this simple puzzle for each participant.

Print a copy of the Difficult Mini Sudoku Puzzle and try to solve it. It can be solved, but it is a fairly difficult puzzle.

Prepare individual handouts for each participant. Estimate the number of people who will be attending your session. Run off that many copies. Each puzzle has twelve numbers already printed in appropriate spaces. Add one extra number to each copy of the puzzle. Use the solution page to write a *different* number on each handout. Since there are twenty-four blank spaces in the original puzzle, you can prepare twenty-four different versions. If you expect more than twenty-four people, cycle through the numbers again.



Flow

Demonstrate how to solve Mini Sudoku Puzzles. Distribute the Simple Mini Sudoku Puzzle and explain how to solve it. Ask the participants to place the numbers in the empty boxes so that every row, column, and 3 x 2 box contains every number from 1 through 6. Point to different spaces in the puzzle and invite participants to yell out the number that goes there.

Brief the players. After the demonstration, distribute copies of the Difficult Mini Sudoku Puzzle and explain that this one is a tougher puzzle to solve. Explain that you have started the solution by writing down a number in its correct location. Tell the participants, “*Let’s see how fast you all can solve this puzzle.*”

Keep your mouth shut. If anyone asks you a question, just reply, “*You are on your own!*”

Terminate the session. After about 2 minutes, blow the whistle and act surprised that the puzzle is not yet solved. Explain that previous groups had solved the puzzle by this time.

Explain the situation. Point out that this was actually a test of the participants' ability to collaborate with each other. Explain that each participant had a different extra number and if all the participants had shared the information and worked with each other, they could have easily and rapidly solved the puzzle.



Debriefing

Elicit the assumptions that participants made. Ask what prevented them from collaborating with each other. Probe to ferret out these types of assumptions:

- All tests have to be completed independently.
- Everyone has the same extra number.
- We are competing with each other.



Learning Points

1. Don't assume that everyone begins from the same place. Even if all the participants had identical handouts, they still bring different experiences, expertise, perceptions, logic, and work styles.
2. Don't assume that you have to complete your tasks independently. Change your default assumption to treating all tasks as collaborative endeavors. Be quick to ask for—and offer—help.



Follow-Up

You can find more Mini Sudoku Puzzles at these websites:

- <http://puzzles.usatoday.com/>
- <http://www.upuzzles.com/>

Simple Mini Sudoku Puzzle

4					5
		2	4		
			3		2
3		1			
		4	1		
1					6

Simple Mini Sudoku Puzzle

4	1	3	6	2	5
6	5	2	4	3	1
5	4	6	3	1	2
3	2	1	5	6	4
2	6	4	1	5	3
1	3	5	2	4	6

Difficult Mini Sudoku Puzzle

	1			4	
6				2	
3	2				
				6	3
	6				2
	5			1	

Difficult Mini Sudoku Solution

5	1	2	3	4	6
6	3	4	1	2	5
3	2	6	4	5	1
1	4	5	2	6	3
4	6	1	5	3	2
2	5	3	6	1	4

Jolt 9

Draw a Tree

Out of sight, out of mind. As this familiar saying suggests, we tend to ignore things that we cannot see, even when they are very important.



Synopsis

Participants are asked to draw a tree, but most will not draw the roots as part of the tree. As the facilitator, you point out the importance of roots and connect the significance of the omission of the tree's roots to the learning point of paying attention to all parts of a system.



Purpose

- To stress the importance of infrastructure and support systems not immediately visible.



Training Topics

- Critical Thinking
- Mindfulness



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 100



Time

- 2 minutes for the activity, 5 to 10 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- Index cards
- Pens or pencils



Preparation

Before the participants arrive, leave an index card and pencil on the seats for use during the activity.



Flow

Give instructions. Ask the participants to draw a tree on the index cards you provided. Set a time limit of 45 seconds. Explain that the drawing can be realistic or abstract and that the critical requirement is that the drawing be completed within the 45-second time limit.

Conclude the activity. At the end of 45 seconds announce the end of the activity.



Debriefing

Ask participants to look at their drawings and raise their hands if their drawing shows roots. You are likely to find that most did not include the root system in their rendering of a tree. Present the following learning point in your own words:

- *All of your trees likely have trunks and branches and leaves. But most of them do not have roots.*
- *So what is holding up the trees without the root system? How do your trees get water and nutrition?*
- *Do you agree that the root system is an important part of a tree? Why did you leave out the root system? Was it because you usually don't see the roots?*

Ask participants to suggest other things we habitually ignore just because these important support elements are not visible. Use the example of the current training session and ask the participants to identify the people behind the scenes who contribute to the success of the training experience.

Ask participants to discuss the possible dangers of neglecting what we cannot immediately see. Brainstorm some techniques for preventing this habit.



Learning Points

1. We tend to ignore things that are not clearly visible.
2. Very often the things we choose to ignore play a important role in our success.

Jolt 10

Duck or Rabbit

I use optical illusions in my training activities to explore errors in perception and cognition. I have also use these illusions as metaphors for important principles in diversity and inclusion.



Synopsis

Ask the participants to view an ambiguous figure and decide whether it is a duck or a rabbit. Train the participants to rapidly flip between the two perspectives. Explain the importance of cultivating an opposable mind that can rapidly flip between two opposing ideas.



Purpose

- To alternate between two apparently contradictory ideas.



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 20



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 7 minutes for debriefing.



Preparation

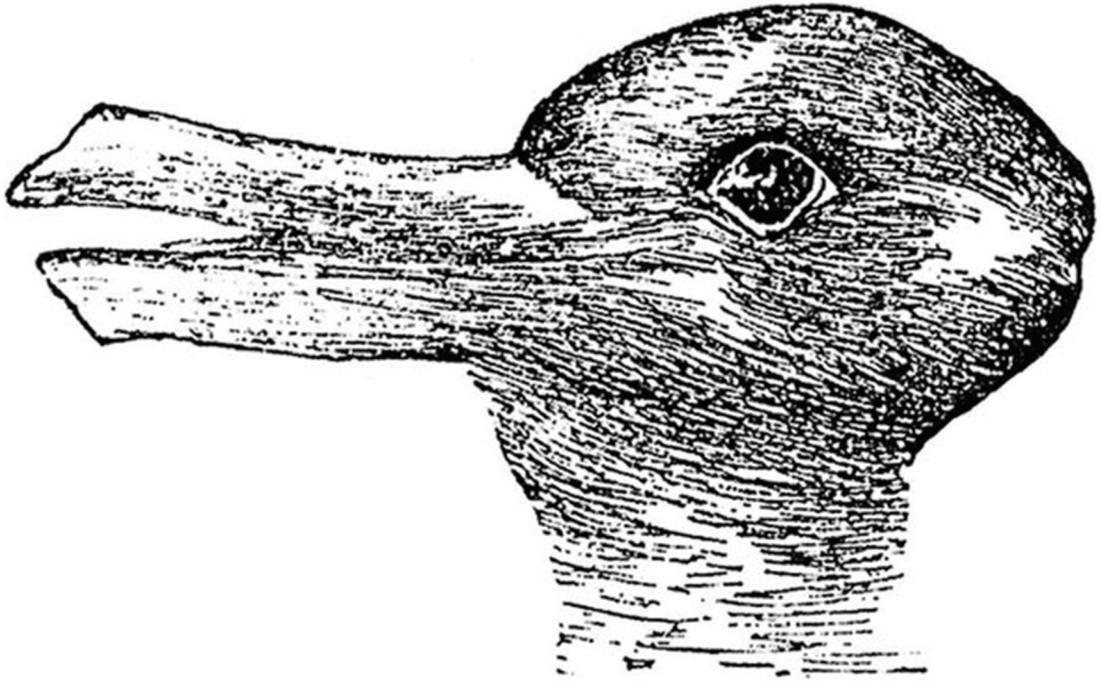
Prepare slides. Review the *Flow* section below and make slides to display different *Duck/Rabbit* illusions. Also, prepare slides with pairs of contradictory ideas.



Flow

Brief the participants. With a playful grin, tell the participants that you are going to teach them basic concepts in zoology. You will begin by helping them differentiate between birds and animals.

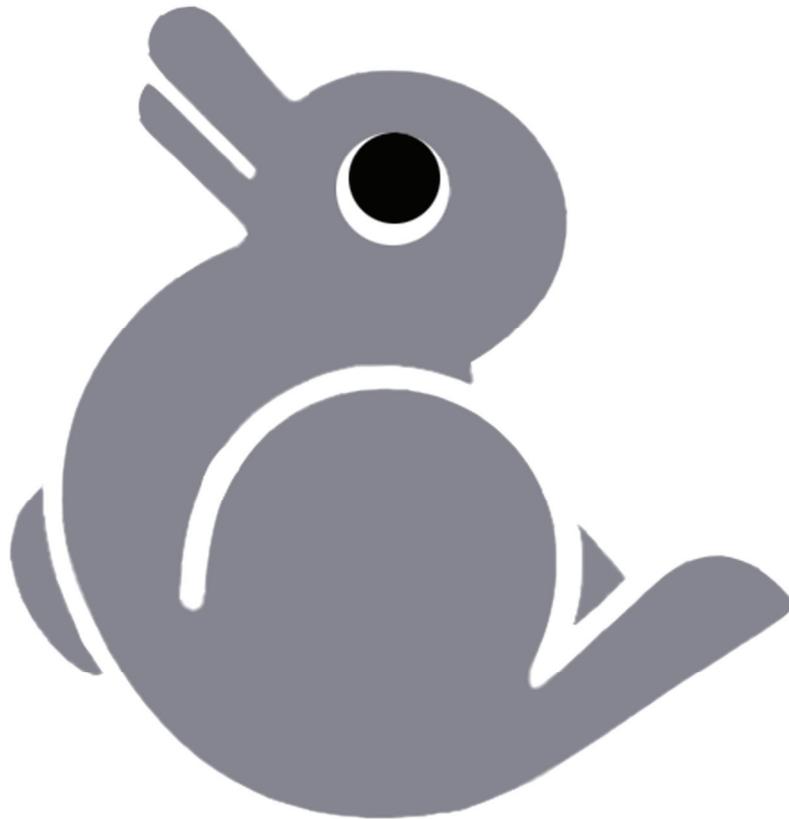
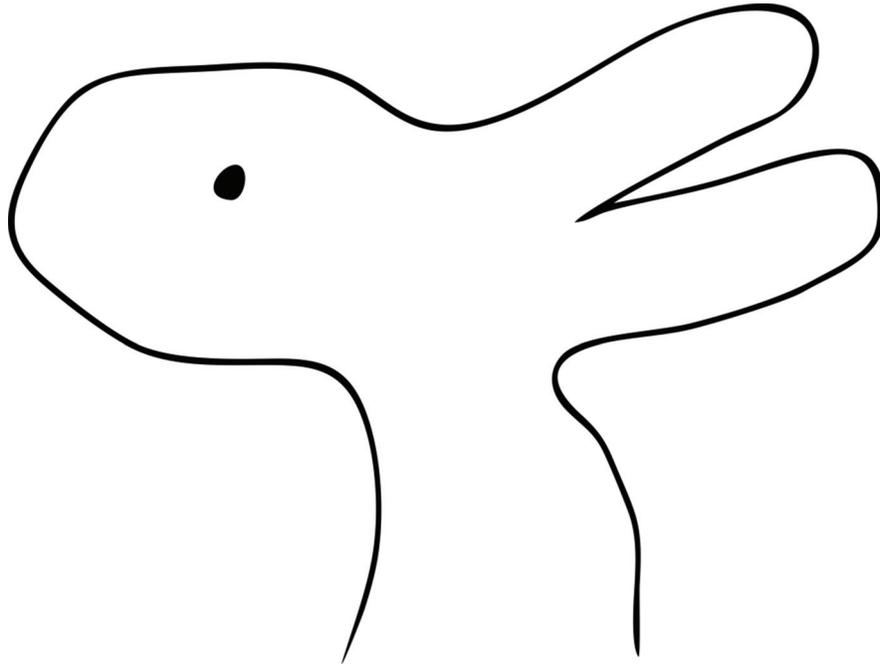
Display the 1892 figure. Present this ambiguous figure:



Explain that this figure was first published in a German humor magazine, *Fliegende Blätter* in 1892. Ask the participants to raise their hands if they see the picture of a duck. Pause for a few seconds and ask them if they see the picture of a rabbit.

Explain alternative perspectives. Tell the participants that they can see either a duck or a rabbit in the figure. Check to see if all the participants can see these.

Show additional versions. Display these two slides:



After displaying each slide, ask the participants if they see a rabbit and a duck. **Explain the difficulty of seeing both images at the same time.** Ask the participants if they can alternate between seeing the duck and the rabbit. Point out that most people have a preference about what they see first but they can train themselves to see both the duck and the rabbit. Also point out that it is almost impossible to see both the duck and the rabbit simultaneously.



Debriefing

Relate to creativity. Encourage the participants to practice flipping rapidly between the duck and the rabbit. Explain that the ability to flip between the two figures has been shown to be correlated with a person's creative ability to come up with alternative uses for common objects such as paper clips and chairs.

Relate to paradoxes. Remind the participants that it is difficult to see both the duck and the rabbit at the same time. Explain that this fact could be used as a metaphor for the way the human brain handles paradoxical ideas.

Conduct polls with pairs of contradictory ideas. Display these statements as the alternatives in a poll:

- A. Teamwork increases productivity and speeds up results.
- B. Teamwork decreases productivity and wastes time.

Ask the participants to stand up if they believe that Statement A is more valid. Repeat the polling with these two statements:

- A. Time is a scarce commodity. It is linear.
- B. Time is an abundant commodity. It is flexible.

Point out the paradox. Explain that both statements in an apparently contradictory pair could be perceived as being equally true by people from different cultural backgrounds. Invite the participants to suggest other pairs of statements that appear to contradict each other but are valid in themselves. Pause while the participants respond.

Introduce the concept of the opposable mind. Refer to Roger Martin's book, *Opposable Mind: Winning Through Integrative Think*. Present the following key points from the book in your own words:

- Usually, our brain cannot handle two opposing thoughts at the same time.
- But we can train ourselves to think alternatively between two perspectives.
- This will help us figure out when to use which perspective.

Conclude the activity. Announce that the session has come to an end. Immediately contradict yourself by saying, "This session has just begun."



Learning Points

1. Usually, our brain cannot handle two different perspectives at the same time.
2. We can train ourselves to think alternatively between two perspectives.
3. We can train ourselves to figure out when to use which perspective.



Variations and Adjustments

Want to use other illusions? If you feel most people are tired of the duck-rabbit illusion, search the Internet for other ambiguous figures. Here are some classics: young woman or old woman, an Eskimo or an Indian head, and two faces or a vase. My favorite ambiguous figure is the horse or the frog.

Play Sample

Here are some paradoxical statements contributed by the participants in a recent training webinar:

- *Avoid direct communication. Avoid indirect communication.*
- *Logic is more important than faith. Faith is more important than logic.*
- *Religion is a force for good. Religion is a force for evil.*
- *Seeing is believing. Believing is seeing.*
- *We should be serious about play. We should be playful about serious problems.*

Jolt 11

Exclusion

We have no control over diversity, but we do have control over inclusion (and exclusion). We are fascinated by the factors that influence exclusion.

From a design point of view, this jolt makes the maximum use of what-if scenarios during the debriefing discussion. This approach enables us to go beyond the limited experience in the activity and to extrapolate to a wider range of contexts.



Synopsis

After solving a series of puzzles, team members anonymously vote out a colleague to reduce the size of the team. The debriefing discussion deals with the emotional consequences.



Purpose

To explore emotions related with the exclusion of a person from a team, both from the point of view of the excluded person and of the surviving members of the team.



Training Topics

- Decision making
- Downsizing
- Exclusion and inclusion
- Teamwork



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 4 minutes for the activity, 7 minutes for debriefing.



Handouts

- Handout, Triplet Puzzles (one copy for each team)
- Handout, Triplet Solutions (one copy for the facilitator)
- Handout, More Triplet Puzzles (one copy for each participant)
- Handout, More Triplet Solutions (one copy for the facilitator)



Supplies

- Countdown timer
- Whistle
- Paper and pencils



Preparation

Become familiar with triplet puzzles. Read the *Flow* section below to figure out how to solve these puzzles. Try your hand at solving the triplet puzzles in the two handouts.

The solutions are given on 44 and 46. But don't peek until you have made a valiant effort to solve the puzzles on your own.



Flow

Organize participants into teams. Assign four or five members to each team. Give a copy of the Triplets Puzzle handout to each team. (Give a single copy to the team to force its members to interact with each other.)

Explain how to solve triplet puzzles. Point out that a *triplet* is a set of three words that are linked by a common fourth word. Ask the participants to read the first set of triplets in the handout (ELEPHANT–HOUSE–SNOW) and invite them to guess the word that links these three words. The linking word should appear before or after each of the three words to form well-known compound words or phrases.

It is very likely that the participants will figure out the correct answer for the first triplet. If not, point out that the linking word is WHITE, as in *white* elephant, *White* House, and Snow *White*.

Work through two more examples. Ask the participants to study the second triplet (BOARD–HOLE–JACK) and try to find the answer. Show how the linking word BLACK forms *black* board, *black* hole, and *blackjack*.

Introduce the next triplet (MAKER–TENNIS–STICK) and let the participants figure out the solution (MATCH).

Conduct a team contest. Ask each team to solve as many of the triplets as possible within the next 2 minutes. Start the countdown timer and give a 30-second warning after 90 seconds. Blow a whistle at the end of 2 minutes. Identify the team that has solved the most triplets and congratulate them.

Ask teams to select a member to be eliminated. Explain that for the next round of the triplets contest, you are going to reduce the size of each team by one member. Distribute pieces of paper to the participants and ask each person to secretly write the name of the person to be eliminated from the team and to fold this paper. After a brief pause, ask someone on each team to collect the pieces of paper, mix them, read the names, and announce the person to be eliminated.

Remove a team member. Ask the participants who have been voted out to leave the team and go to a separate table at the side of the room. Pause dramatically for 15 seconds or so.



Debriefing

Introduce the discussion. Explain that you would like to conduct a debriefing discussion about the elimination activity (before continuing with the triplet-solving contest) to learn how people react to being excluded from a team.

Ask for reactions. Invite the participants to reflect on the elimination activity and their reactions to it. Ask these types of questions to start the conversation:

- *If you are a team member who was eliminated, how do you feel about it?*
- *If you are a team member who was not eliminated, how do you feel about it?*
- *How do you feel about the plight of the eliminated team members?*
- *How did you feel about having to eliminate one of your fellow team members?*
- *Why do some of the survivors feel guilty about eliminating a team member?*
- *Why do some of the survivors feel anxious about their own future on the team?*

Ask what-if questions. Explain that you would like to go beyond the limited experience in the activity and explore different what-if scenarios. Ask the following types of questions to start this phase of the discussion:

- *What if you had to eliminate a team member through a public discussion instead of anonymous voting?*
- *What if we appointed a team leader with the responsibility for eliminating a member?*
- *What if we were required to use objective criteria to eliminate a team member?*
- *What if the best performer resigned to join another team?*
- *What if the youngest team member was eliminated? What if it was the oldest team member?*
- *What if we were told that team members will be eliminated, one by one, after each future round of the contest?*



Learning Points

1. Eliminating a person from a team is always a painful activity. The person who is eliminated may feel betrayed and resentful. The people who select the person to be eliminated feel guilty and anxious.
2. Even when there are logical reasons for downsizing a team, people feel the same types of emotional reactions.
3. Many different factors influence the intensity and duration of emotional reactions to downsizing.



Follow-Up

After the debriefing discussion, give out individual copies of the second handout (More Triplet Puzzles) and invite the participants to solve them individually or in teams of any size.



Variations

Not enough people? You can conduct this jolt with as few as three participants by having them form a single team.

What if team members refuse to eliminate someone? Accept their decision. Explain what usually happens among teams. Proceed with the debriefing discussion.

Related Jolt

Jolt 8. Diversity and Inclusion is another activity that explores exclusion and inclusion.

Triplet Puzzles

1. LOVE, BLUE, GRIT
2. LAMP, LIP, ROOM
3. CRAB, PIE, SAUCE
4. REMOTE, ROD, TOWER
5. LEAP, BOOK, END
6. CHAIR, WRESTLING, FIRE
7. BRAND, MEXICO
8. BENEFIT, CERTIFICATE, SUDDEN
9. CAPSULE, MAGAZINE, TRAVEL
10. LINE, MAST, QUARTERS
11. BARRIER, EASTER, TREASURE
12. ABOVE, INCOME, RAINFALL
13. CARD, KEEPER PLAN
14. LANDING, MUSICAL, PRECISION
15. COLLAR, ELEPHANT, HOUSE
16. ANNUAL, MEDICAL, WEATHER
17. ATLANTIC, CRUISE, CURRENT
18. THINK TOP, WARFARE
19. DOOR, EMERGENCY, RAMP
20. DEDUCTION, ESTATE, LOOPHOLE
21. FOX, MAN, WITCH
22. CUBE, DRY, BREAKER
23. JOY, FIGURE, NIGHT

Triplet Solutions

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. LOVE, BLUE, GRIT | TRUE |
| 2. LAMP, LIP, ROOM | READING |
| 3. CRAB, PIE, SAUCE | APPLE |
| 4. REMOTE, ROD, TOWER | CONTROL |
| 5. LEAP, BOOK, END | YEAR |
| 6. CHAIR, WRESTLING, FIRE | ARM |
| 7. BRAND, MEXICO, YORK | NEW |
| 8. BENEFIT, CERTIFICATE, SUDDEN | DEATH |
| 9. CAPSULE, MAGAZINE, TRAVEL | TIME |
| 10. LINE, MAST, QUARTERS | HEAD |
| 11. BARRIER, EASTER, TREASURE | ISLAND |
| 12. ABOVE, INCOME, RAINFALL | AVERAGE |
| 13. CARD, KEEPER PLAN | GAME |
| 14. LANDING, MUSICAL, PRECISION | INSTRUMENT |
| 15. COLLAR, ELEPHANT, HOUSE | WHITE |
| 16. ANNUAL, MEDICAL, WEATHER | REPORT |
| 17. ATLANTIC, CRUISE, CURRENT | OCEAN |
| 18. THINK TOP, WARFARE | TANK |
| 19. DOOR, EMERGENCY, RAMP | EXIT |
| 20. DEDUCTION, ESTATE, LOOPHOLE | TAX |
| 21. FOX, MAN, WITCH | HUNT |
| 22. CUBE, DRY, BREAKER | ICE |
| 23. JOY, FIGURE, NIGHT | STICK |

More Triplet Puzzles

1. BALL, COURT, TABLE
2. ACID, BOW, CHECK
3. EATER, SOLDIER, FARM
4. BRIEF, STUDY, SUIT
5. FEVER, JACKET, SUBMARINE
6. DUTY, RADIO, VOICE
7. MAIDEN, PEN, TAG
8. PARK, STITCH, TALK
9. INSURANCE, LONG, PAPER
10. KEEPER, LIGHT, WARMING
11. BLOT, BOTTLE, RED
12. IRON, NEW, SPOTS
13. CANYON, FATHER, JURY
14. BRACELET, NUMBER, STATION
15. FALL, HARD, MELON
16. HIGH, RAIL, RUNNER
17. COUPLE, JOB, NUMBER
18. BLAZER, HIKING, VAPOR
19. EVIL, GLASSES, WITNESS
20. BOOK, INSIDE, PRACTICAL
21. CRUDE, RIG, SNAKE
22. PUPPY, STORY, TOUGH
23. LIFE, LIMIT, PART
24. BULLET, DOLLAR, SCREEN

More Triplet Solutions

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. BALL, COURT, TABLE | TENNIS |
| 2. ACID, BOW, CHECK | RAIN |
| 3. EATER, SOLDIER, FARM | ANT |
| 4. BRIEF, STUDY, SUIT | CASE |
| 5. FEVER, JACKET, SUBMARINE | YELLOW |
| 6. DUTY, RADIO, VOICE | ACTIVE |
| 7. MAIDEN, PEN, TAG | NAME |
| 8. PARK, STITCH, TALK | DOUBLE |
| 9. INSURANCE, LONG, PAPER | TERM |
| 10. KEEPER, LIGHT, WARMING | HOUSE |
| 11. BLOT, BOTTLE, RED | INK |
| 12. IRON, NEW, SPOTS | AGE |
| 13. CANYON, FATHER, JURY | GRAND |
| 14. BRACELET, NUMBER, STATION | IDENTIFICATION |
| 15. FALL, HARD, MELON | WATER |
| 16. HIGH, RAIL, RUNNER | ROAD |
| 17. COUPLE, JOB, NUMBER | ODD |
| 18. BLAZER, HIKING, VAPOR | TRAIL |
| 19. EVIL, GLASSES, WITNESS | EYE |
| 20. BOOK, INSIDE, PRACTICAL | JOKE |
| 21. CRUDE, RIG, SNAKE | OIL |
| 22. PUPPY, STORY, TOUGH | LOVE |
| 23. LIFE, LIMIT, PART | TIME |
| 24. BULLET, DOLLAR, SCREEN | SILVER |

Jolt 12

First Touch

Use this jolt to explore opportunities for win-win solutions among participants.



Synopsis

Two participants are asked to hold their index fingers six inches above a “Rule Sheet” that the facilitator has placed on the table. The winner or loser of the game is determined by the person whose index finger touches the rule sheet first during the course of the game.



Purpose

- To explore the reasons why players do not naturally gravitate toward strategies that ensure mutual victory.



Training Topics

- Negotiation
- Problem solving
- Cooperation



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number, divided into groups of three

Best: 9 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 to 15 minutes for debriefing.



Handout

- One copy of a the *First Touch Rule Sheet* for each group.



Flow

Form groups. Ask participants to organize themselves into groups of three. Appoint one person in each group to be the Rule Sheet Referee and give that appointee a copy of the Rule Sheet.

Brief the participants. Explain that the game is very simple and the two simple rules for winning (or losing) are printed on the Rule Sheet.

Explain the responsibilities of the Rule Sheet to the Referee in each group. Tell the referee that his or her job, in addition to placing the Rule Sheet on the table with the printed side up, is to observe the behavior of the other two players.

Give instructions to the players. Ask the two players in each group to extend their right index fingers and each hold that finger approximately six inches above the surface of the Rule Sheet while pointing to the rules.

Read the rules. Ask participants to read and repeat the two rules on the Rule Sheet:

You win if you get the other person's right index finger to touch the Rule Sheet first. You lose if your right index finger touches the Rule Sheet first.

Conduct the game. Say, "Let the game begin!" Walk among the different groups and observe what the players are doing. Make a mental note of any interesting strategy.

Conclude the game. After about 2 minutes or whenever the majority of players have completed the task, stop the play.



Debriefing

Begin the debriefing discussion with this question:

- *If you were a Rule Sheet Referee, what interesting things did you observe?*

Conduct the remainder of the debriefing discussion by asking questions such as:

- *How many of you won the game? How do you feel about it?*
- *How many of you lost the game? How do you feel about it?*
- *How many of you have not completed the game? How do you feel about it?*
- *How many of you used the strategy of both of you touching the Rule Sheet at the same time? How do you feel about it? How do the other players feel about this strategy?*
- *What are some of the different strategies that you have tried? How did they work?*
- *How many of you assumed that if you win, the other player has to lose? What made you come up with this assumption?*

- *Did you think of win-win strategies? If you did not, what stopped you from doing so?*
- *What are different strategies that would have enabled both players to win?*
- *How would your behavior have changed if the winner received a cash prize?*
- *How would your behavior have changed, if there was a time limit of 30 seconds?*
- *How does the game reflect events in your workplace?*
- *How would you behave differently if we played the game again?*
- *Knowing what you learned from this activity, how would you change some of your behaviors in the workplace?*



Learning Points

1. Activities that involve winning automatically encourage competitive behavior.
2. If we are willing to think cooperatively, it is possible for everyone to win.



More...

You can add *Jolt 20, Newton*, immediately after this one because it incorporates similar learning points. You don't need to point out the similarities.

First Touch Rule Sheet

You WIN if you get the other person's right index finger to touch the Rule Sheet first.

You LOSE if your right index finger touches the Rule Sheet first.

Jolt 13

Free Time

This jolt makes its point by giving secret instructions to one group of participants while excluding a second group from any knowledge of these cultural clues. Thiagi has used this activity successfully in the middle of a diversity presentation with hundreds of participants assembled in an auditorium.



Synopsis

Participants receive either a red or green dot as they enter the room. The red and green dots are used to separate the participants into two groups so that the facilitator can share secret information with one group and not the other to make a learning point about diversity and inclusion.



Purpose

- To explore how it feels to be excluded—and to be the one excluding.



Training Topics

- Diversity
- Inclusion



Participants

Minimum: 4

Maximum: Any number

Best: 20 to 50



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 3 to 10 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- A supply of green and red sticky dots
- Timer
- Whistle



Equipment

- Laptop computer
- LCD projector
- Screen



Caution

This jolt requires the facilitator to secretly compel one group of participants to ignore members of another group. Be ready to explain this stratagem (and to provide your rationale) during debriefing.



Preparation

Prepare a slide with items listed in the Flow section.



Flow

Organize groups. As participants come to the session, randomly give each person a green dot or a red dot. Distribute approximately equal numbers of each color. Ask participants to stick the dots to their name tags or their forehead or any other highly visible spot.

Brief participants. In the middle of a presentation, ask all the participants to think of how they would like to spend 3 minutes of free time that you will shortly give them.

Assign planning strategies. Explain that you are going to conduct an experiment on right-brain and left-brain strategies for planning. Ask the participants to note the colored dot they were given as they walked into the room. Tell the participants with green dots to prepare a linear to-do list for the 3-minute period on any available piece of paper. Next, ask the participants who received red dots to close their eyes and just visualize what they will be doing during their 3 minutes of free time. Emphasize to the participants with red dots the importance of keeping their eyes closed until you blow your whistle.

Give secret instructions to greens. Project a slide with these items:

- *Shhh! Follow these secrets instructions.*
- *When I blow the whistle, start an enthusiastic conversation. Share your ideas for how to spend the free 3-minute time period.*
- *But talk only to other greens. Ignore reds. Don't talk to them.*
- *Shout across chairs to other greens. If necessary, walk over to meet other greens.*
- *If reds talk to you, don't respond. Ignore them.*

Begin the free-time period. Turn off the projector. After about 1 minute blow your whistle and ask the participants with the red dots to open their eyes. Start the timer and invite all participants to discuss their plans for the remaining 2 minutes of free time. Watch the activities of the participants and how they interact with each other. Blow your whistle after 2 minutes and announce the end of the free-time period.



Debriefing

Conduct a debriefing discussion. Follow this suggested sequence for discussion:

- **Ask “How did you feel?”** Establish that the participants with the red dots felt uncomfortable about being ignored and excluded. Also establish that the participants with the green dots felt uncomfortable about ignoring and excluding other participants.
- **Ask “What happened?”** Ask participants for their explanations of what happened during the activity and why. The participants with green dots will likely explain that they were merely following the instructions to ignore the others. Display the secret instructions on the screen again and continue with the debriefing.
- **Ask greens “Why?”** Discuss why the greens chose to follow the instructions to ignore the reds despite feeling uncomfortable. Point out that you indoctrinated these participants to follow this uncharacteristic behavior in just a few seconds and to imagine how strong their behavior might be if they had been acculturated to follow this behavior pattern for several years.
- **Relate to the workplace.** Ask the question, “In what ways is this activity similar to the dynamics in your own workplace?” Discuss the responses from your participants.
- **Ask “What if?” questions.** Use questions such as, “What if there were a higher number of reds than greens?” and “What if the free-time period lasted for 10 minutes?”
- **Ask “What next?” questions.** Use questions such as, “Considering what you learned from this activity, how would you change the way you include or exclude people who belong to different groups in your organization?”



Learning Points

1. Participants felt uncomfortable during the exercise whether they were the victims of exclusion or the participants imposing the exclusionary behavior.
2. It is easy for people in a position of authority to set up norms of group behavior.

Jolt 14

Green Monkeys

In my positive psychology training sessions, I use a thought experiment to help the participants explore different techniques for avoiding obsessive ruminations. Here's a somewhat amusing jolt that delivers a serious learning point.



Synopsis

Ask the participants not to think of green monkeys during a 30-second period. Conduct a debriefing discussion about the lessons learned from this thought experiment.



Purpose

- To experience obsessive thoughts and come up with techniques for avoiding them.



Training Topics

- Thought Control
- Taboos
- Choking
- Mindfulness



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number

Best: 15 to 30



Time

- 1 minute for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Equipment

- Timer
- Whistle



Flow

Announce the thought experiment. Tell the participants that you will blow the whistle and start a timer. The participants will have 30 seconds to conduct a simple thought experiment.

Give details of the experiment. Present these instructions in your own words:

Here's a mind-control task for you. Don't think about green monkeys for the next 30 seconds. During the 30 seconds, you may think of anything you want. But do not think of green monkeys. Remember to avoid thinking of green monkeys.

Conduct the experiment. Blow the whistle and start the timer for 30 seconds.

Conclude the experiment. After about 30 seconds, blow the whistle and announce the end of the green monkey experiment.



Debriefing

Conduct a poll. Blow the whistle and ask the participants to raise their hand if they succeeded in not thinking about green monkeys. Pause briefly to let the participants realize that almost all of them failed in this mind-control experiment.

Find a partner. Ask the participants to find a partner and discuss a set of debriefing questions.

Ask for the learning point. Ask the participants to talk to their partner about what they learned from this thought experiment. After a suitable pause, invite the participants to announce the learning points they came up with.

Announce your learning point. Tell the participants that most people who participated in this experiment came up with a learning point somewhat similar to this:

The more you try to avoid thinking about a specific thing, the more intensely and frequently you think about it.

Ask for examples of negative rumination. Point out that green monkeys are harmless and amusing thoughts. However, sometimes we tend to brood about negative thoughts such as the mistakes we made and arguments we lost. Invite the participants to share with their partners examples of repetitive thoughts.

Share the examples. After a suitable pause, invite the participants to share their responses with the entire group.

Ask for thought-stopping techniques. Point out that ruminating on negative thoughts increases our stress level and makes us feel depressed. Invite the participants to discuss with their partner suitable techniques for avoiding such ruminations.

Share the techniques. After a suitable pause, invite the participants to share their responses with the entire group.



Learning Point

- The more you try to avoid thinking about a specific thing, the more intensely and frequently you think about it.



More...

Daniel Wagner and other psychologists have studied the thought-suppression phenomenon incorporated in the green money experiment. There is even a technical name for this phenomenon: *ironic process theory*.

Here are three resources on the Internet about the ironic process theory:

- American Psychological Association: *Suppressing the “White Bears”*. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/10/unwanted-thoughts.aspx>
- Wikipedia: *Ironic Process Theory*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironic_process_theory
- Psyblog: *8 Ironic Effects of Thought Suppression*. <http://www.spring.org.uk/2011/10/8-ironic-effects-of-thought-suppression.php>

Please don't read any of these articles. Avoid your impulse.

Jolt 15

IAT

Measuring people’s attitudes toward different groups is an essential step in any diversity and inclusion work. Here is a Likert Scale Item that is typically used for measuring attitudes toward a culture group:

All Asians are mathematically talented.

Select the alternative that best reflects your opinion:

- 1 – Strongly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neither disagree or agree
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly agree

The major problem with these types of direct attitude measures is that the test-takers may choose alternatives that present them in a positive light instead of choosing alternatives that reflect their personal opinion.

During the past 20 years, psychologists have been developing and improving a more objective and reliable method of measuring attitudes called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). This jolt is a conceptual introduction to the IAT.



Synopsis

Distribute a deck of cards and a copy of the handout to each participant. All handouts ask the participants to place the cards into two piles, each pile containing cards that belong to two specific suits. The suits specified in half of the handouts are different from the other half (but the participants do not realize this). The participants who are instructed to create one pile of *clubs* and *spades* and another of *hearts* and *diamonds* will complete the task faster than the other participants who are instructed to create one pile of *clubs* and *hearts* and another pile of *spades* and *diamonds*. During the debriefing, relate this result to the framework of the Implicit Association Test for measuring bias.



Purpose

- To experience the principle behind the Implicit Association Test for measuring bias.



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 15 to 30



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Handouts

- Two versions of instructions for sorting the cards.



Supplies

- Playing cards, one deck for each participant.



Equipment

- Whistle



Preparation

Experience the activity. Follow the instructions, one version a time. Notice the difference in the times required for completing the different tasks.

Take the test. Discover your implicit biases by taking a variety of IAT instruments found on this website: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>. Share your experience with the participants during the debriefing discussion.



Flow

Distribute the handouts. Mix equal numbers of handouts in the two different versions and give one copy to each participant. Do not comment on the fact that there are two versions of the handout. Ask the participants to place the handout in front of them, with the printed side down.

Distribute decks of cards. Give a deck of cards to each participant. Ask the participants to remove jokers from the deck and shuffle the cards.

Give instructions. Explain these tasks in your own words:

When I blow the whistle, turn over the handout. Read the instructions carefully. Do not begin to sort the cards until I blow the whistle. Work through the deck, one card at a time, placing each card in one of the two piles. Work as quickly as possible. When you have processed all the playing cards, stand up.

Pause for the participants to complete the task. Blow the whistle and wait until everyone stands up.

Point out the time difference. Bring to the attention of the participants that some of them finished the task faster than the others.

Reveal the secret. Ask everyone to listen carefully and ask one of the early finishers to read the instructions for the two piles. Ask the participants who had the same instructions to stand up. Now ask one of the participants who is still seated to read the instructions about the two piles. Point out the differences between the two sets of instructions.



Debriefing

Ask for an explanation. Ask the participants to figure out why the first set of instructions was easier to follow than the second one. Elicit the response that suits of the same color are easier to spot than suits of different colors.

Make a presentation about implicit association test. Explain that what participants experienced forms the basis for a recent technique for measuring people's attitudes and biases. Share your experiences in taking the Implicit Assumption Test.

Here's what I tell them.

I took an online implicit association test to measure my attitude toward Asian Americans and European American. As the first step, I practiced differentiating between U. S. landmarks (examples: Statue of Liberty and Golden Gate Bridge) and foreign landmarks (examples: Eiffel Tower and Stonehenge) by pressing the letter "e" or "i" on the keyboard. Later, I practiced differentiating between faces of Asian Americans and European Americans using the same keyboard technique. Still later, I differentiated between two pairs of graphics:

- *U.S. landmarks or Asian-American faces*
- *Foreign landmarks or European-American faces*

Finally, I differentiated between these two pairs:

- *U.S. landmarks or Asian-American faces*
- *Foreign landmarks or European-American faces*

While I was pressing the appropriate letters on the keyboard, my computer was timing my reaction speed. The results indicated that I have a strong tendency to associate U.S. Landmarks with European-American faces. In other words, European-Americans were more American than Asian-Americans in my intuitive perception.

This was sad because I prided myself about being interculturally savvy. Also, I belong to the group that I am biased against: Asian Americans.

Suggest a follow-up activity. Encourage the participants to discover their implicit biases by taking a variety of IAT instruments in this website: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>.

Instructions

Place the cards in two different piles:

- Pile 1: Clubs (♣) and Spades (♠)
- Pile 2: Hearts (♥) and Diamonds (♦)

Instructions

Place the cards in two different piles:

- Pile 1: Clubs (♣) and Hearts (♥)
- Pile 2: Spades (♠) and Diamonds (♦)

Jolt 16

Johari

Most of us exhibit an *egocentric bias* that makes us feel above average in our skills, accomplishments, and contributions. The concept of the Johari Window suggests that we are unaware of things about ourselves that other people know and other people are unaware of things that we know.



Synopsis

Each participant secretly rates his or her contribution to the team's work and compares it with other people's ratings.



Purpose

- To compare our personal ratings with those of other people.



Training Topics

- Empathy
- Evaluation
- Teamwork



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number

Best: 12 to 30



Time

- 4 minutes for the activity, 3 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- One blank envelope for each participant
- Several small (1-inch x 1-inch) pieces of paper
- Pencils



Flow

Organize teams. This jolt is a good follow-up activity to a teamwork assignment. In that case, keep the previous teams intact. If you are using this activity as a closer at the end of a training workshop, form teams of three to five members each.

Prepare personal envelopes. Ask each participant to take a blank envelope and write his or her name on its face in big bold letters. Tell the participants to write just a first name or the nickname that the others use.

Rate your contribution. Ask each participant to reflect on his or her contributions to the earlier teamwork or to the success of the workshop. Request each participant to secretly write down a number from 1 to 5 to reflect the value of his or her personal contribution, using this rating system.

1 – None

2 – A little

3 – Moderate

4 – High

5 – Significant

Ask the participants to write their ratings on small pieces of paper and place them inside the envelopes (without sealing them).

Pass the envelope. Ask each person to pass his or her envelope to the next person on the team, seated to the right. Instruct the participants not to open the envelopes when they receive them.

Rate the other person's contribution. Ask each participant to read the name on the envelope and reflect on this person's contribution to the earlier teamwork or to the success of the workshop. As before, each participant secretly writes down a number from 1 to 5 to indicate his or her rating on a small piece of paper and places it inside the envelope.

Repeat the process. Ask the participants to pass the envelopes to the person on the right as before. Each participant now reads the name of a new person and rates that person's performance on the 5-point scale. The participants repeat this activity until they receive their own envelopes.

Make a prediction. When the original envelopes return to the participants, ask them to make a prediction (to themselves) on what their average ratings might be. After doing this, ask the participants to open the envelopes, review the ratings, and compute their averages.



Debriefing

Recommend introspection. Explain that you are going to ask a few questions to encourage the participants to reflect on their experience. Also explain that the participants do not have to share their responses with anyone else.

Compare the ratings. Explain the concept of the Johari Window, which talks about things that we know about ourselves that other people don't know and things other people know about us that we don't know. Invite each participant to compare his or her self-rating with the range of ratings from the others. Encourage participants to reflect on the differences among the ratings and possible reasons for these differences.

Explain the concept of egocentric bias. Tell the participants that most people have a tendency to overrate their own contributions. Ask the participants to check whether this is true of their ratings in comparison with the others.



Learning Points

1. Different people rate other people's contributions differently.
2. Most people have a tendency to overrate their own contributions.



Variations

Want to explore some other topic? Instead of rating contribution to the team, you may ask participants to rate other factors such as *sense of humor* or *creativity*. Obviously, these factors work only when the participants know each other.



Follow-Up

You may do the Johari Window activity online and invite your friends to anonymously talk about you by visiting <http://kevan.org/johari>.

Reference

Read the Wikipedia page on Johari Window: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johari_window.

Jolt 17

LPPT

Here's a jolt that will enable you to use your cute baby picture. But don't let your participants know that baby pictures are involved-until after the activity is completed.



Synopsis

Playing the role of applicants to a nurse's job, participants take a patient preference test. Later, they discover that their least-preferred patient is actually the most adorable.



Purpose

- To explore the causes and consequences of assumptions that we use for making decisions.



Training Topics

- Assumptions
- Decision making
- Judging people



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Handout

- Handout, *Least Preferred Patient Test* (one copy for each participant)



Preparation

Create three slides that show:

1. Patient B. R. (an old woman)
2. Patient S. T. (an old man)
3. Patient J. T. (a cute little baby)



Flow

Distribute copies of the Least Preferred Patient Test. Ask participants to read the instructions and circle their choices. Emphasize that they are selecting the *least* preferred patient.

Give feedback about the first two patients. Ask for participants who selected Patient B. R. as the least preferred patient. Show the slide with a picture of this patient. Repeat the same procedure with Patient S. T.

Give feedback about the third patient. Ask for participants who selected Patient J. T. as the least preferred patient. It is likely that most participants selected this patient. Show the slide with the cute baby picture. Pause briefly while participants realize the impulsive assumptions they made.



Debriefing

Ask the participants about what assumptions they made and why they made them. Don't make fun of the participants' assumptions.

Ask the participants what makes the difference between older people and babies who have the same behavioral characteristics.



Learning Points

1. We react to people based on their future potential.
2. We tend to over-generalize from the available information.

Least Preferred Patient Test

You have been recently hired by Burlington General Hospital, well known for its work in geriatrics. As a part of the hospital's personality testing battery, they ask you to take this test:

Circle the patient on the list below whom you would least enjoy taking care of:

Patient B. R. B. R. is outgoing and appreciative. She cannot talk too well, but is otherwise communicative. She is friendly, fearless, and inquisitive. She looks good and is relatively self-sufficient. She asks about the nurse's well-being and sleeps through the night.

Patient S. T. S. T. is grouchy and something of a hypochondriac. He is scraggly looking. He needs help walking, but can take care of himself when he reaches his destination. He sleeps, but not a lot.

Patient J. T. J. T. is self-centered. He cries a lot and can't walk or talk. He is incontinent and cannot feed himself. He is almost bald, wrinkly, and cranky. He wakes up at all hours of the night.

Jolt 18

Meet the Trainer

Introducing yourself at the beginning of a workshop is one of the required, but boring, activities. Here's an opener that Thiagi frequently uses to get over (and make use of) this chore. When he uses *Meet the Trainer* in his diversity training workshops, he debriefs the participants to explore how they guessed the answers when they didn't have the correct information.



Synopsis

Distribute a questionnaire about yourself. Ask the participants to answer all questions, guessing the answers if they don't know them. Organize the participants into teams and discuss the answers, one at a time. Debrief how cultural differences influence the participants' guesses.



Purpose

- To explore how a person's cultural background and personal appearance influence our initial perceptions and assumptions.



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 4 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Handouts

- Questionnaire about the trainer, one copy for each participant
- Answers to the questions, one copy for each team



Supplies

- Pens or pencils



Equipment

- Timer
- Whistle



Preparation

Prepare a questionnaire. Come up with a list of four or five questions about you. Make sure that these questions are related to the training topic. Prepare a list of correct answers.



Flow

Distribute the questionnaire. Explain that rather than introducing yourself, you are going to have the participants share what they already know about you and what they can guess about you.

Explain the task. Ask the participants to work independently. Instruct them to review each question and write down the answer. Encourage them to hazard a guess if they don't know the answer. Announce a 3-minute time limit.

Organize teams. At the end of 3 minutes, blow your whistle and ask the participants to form teams of 3 to 5 people each.

Ask teams to reach consensus. Ask members of each team to share their answers and select the most likely answer.



Debriefing

Give the correct answers, one at a time. Ask and discuss the following questions about each answer:

- *How many of you gave the correct answer?*
- *How many of you guessed an incorrect answer?*
- *What are the incorrect guesses?*
- *What assumptions led you to an incorrect guess?*

Point out that we make guesses about people all the time. These guesses are frequently based on the physical appearance and the cultural background of a person. Sometimes the guesses are correct, and sometimes they are wrong.



Learning Points

1. We easily make assumptions about a person, even when we lack accurate information.
2. Some of our assumptions are influenced by the person's cultural background.
3. Sometimes our assumptions are correct; sometimes they are not.



Variations

Don't like to talk about yourself? Ask the participants to answer questions about a randomly selected person in the room. Alternatively, project a photo of someone you know and invite the participants to answer questions about this person.

Would you like more audience participation? Let the participants generate a list of questions about you. Select four or five of these questions and ask them to answer these questions.

Questionnaire

What Do You Know About Your Trainer?

1. Where was he born?
2. When was he born?
3. What is his current citizenship?
4. How did he end up in the United States?
5. In how many different countries has he conducted training workshops?
6. What is his first language?

Answers

What Do You Know About Your Trainer?

1. *Where was he born? (Chennai [known as Madras in the good old days], India)*
2. *When was he born? (1938)*
3. *What is his citizenship? (USA)*
4. *How did he end up in the United States? (He was discovered by a U.S. professor who conducted a workshop in India)*
5. *In how many different countries has he conducted training workshops? (27)*
6. *What is his first language? (Tamil)*

Jolt 19

Mingle

Working with people from different cultures means that we must be sensitive to different behavioral expectations. Rather than reading about how to deal with these differences, this jolt provides participants with a firsthand experience that delivers an important cultural message.



Synopsis

Participants in this jolt pretend they are attending a party and must follow the instructions on a secret *Etiquette Card* provided by the facilitator. Some of the behaviors the participants are instructed to do are unusual, contradictory, and confusing. A debriefing discussion that follows the “party” focuses on dealing with differences in cultural norms.



Purpose

- To explore different rules of etiquette and cultural taboos.



Training Topics

- Diversity
- Inclusion



Participants

Minimum: 5

Maximum: Any number

Best: 15 to 50



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5-10 minutes for debriefing.



Handout

- Etiquette cards on index stock (to be prepared using the Mingle Handout), one card for each participant.



Caution

Some participants may be uncomfortable behaving as the Etiquette Card instructs. However, most of the participants soon realize that everyone else is following the unusual demands and relax.



Preparation

Prepare etiquette cards from the list on the Mingle Handout and give one to each participant.

Start each card with this message:

*This is your etiquette card. Please do not show it to anyone else.
Read the message in secret and put away the card.*

You may use the rules provided in the handout or create your own messages. You may also repeat the same message on more than one card if you anticipate a lot of participants.



Flow

Distribute etiquette cards. As the participants enter the training room, give each an Etiquette Card.

Join the party. Ask participants to pretend that they are at a party. Urge them to get together in small groups and discuss any topic of their choice.

Behave appropriately. Ask participants to behave courteously according to the rules on their Etiquette Cards during the conversation without revealing what this rule instructs them to do.

Conclude the party. After about 3 minutes, announce the end of the party, gather all the cards, and conduct a debriefing discussion.



Debriefing

Ask participants to point to the person who behaved in the most bizarre fashion. Point out the acceptable behaviors (and even preferred behaviors) in some of the groups as examples.

Use the same procedure to identify and discuss the most irritating behaviors, the most alien behaviors, and the most comical behaviors.



Learning Points

1. Behaviors or customs that one person views as polite or acceptable may be rude or inappropriate to another person.
2. Everyone feels uncomfortable behaving outside his or her cultural norms.



Variation

Want to change the context? Instead of staging a party, ask participants to pretend they are at a picnic or in a business meeting. The etiquette cards cover a wide variety of situations, so you can be creative.

Mingle Handout

It is impolite to stand aloof, so stand close to the others until you almost touch them. If someone backs off, keep moving closer.

It is impolite to crowd people, so maintain your distance. Stand away so that there is at least an arm's length between you and the nearest person. If anyone gets too close to you, back off until you have achieved the required distance.

It is impolite to shout, so talk softly. Whisper even when people cannot hear you; do not raise your voice.

It is impolite to talk to more than one person at the same time. Always talk to a single individual standing near you so that you can have a private conversation. Do not address your remarks to the group as a whole.

It is impolite to stare at people, so avoid eye contact. Look at the floor or the speaker's shoes. Do not look directly at the speaker's face.

It is important to get people's attention before you speak, so hold your hand above your head and snap your fingers. Do this every time you make a statement or ask a question. That's the polite way to get everyone's attention.

It is friendly to share your thoughts and feelings without any inhibition. So feel free to make self-disclosure statements. Describe your intimate feelings about different subjects. Ask personal questions of the other members of the group.

It is polite and reassuring to reach out and touch someone. Touch people on the arm or the shoulder when you speak to them.

It is important to show your enthusiasm. So jump in before other speakers have finished their sentences and add your ideas. Remember, it is rude to hold back your thoughts.

It is impolite to be blunt and tactless. It is preferable to talk in abstractions and to approach the subject in an indirect fashion.

It is impolite to speak impulsively. Whenever somebody asks you a question, silently count to seven before you give the answer.

Jolt 20

Newton

Newton's third law says that *for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction*. This classic scientific maxim is illustrated by this jolt, even though it has nothing to do with physics.



Synopsis

Pairs of participants face each other and engage in a mild physical power game to demonstrate a learning point about cooperative solutions.



Purpose

- To explore negotiating win-win solutions.



Training Topics

- Negotiation
- Cooperation
- Competition



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 40



Time

- 2 minutes for the activity, 5-15 minutes for debriefing.



Equipment

- Whistle
- Countdown timer



Flow

Give initial instructions. Ask the participants to pair up and stand facing each other. Ask them to plant their feet firmly on the ground. They should next raise both hands to an outstretched position in front of their bodies and place their hands palm to palm against their partners' hands.

Explain how to win. Say that the participant who forces his or her partner to move his or her feet within 17 seconds will win the activity. Repeat this rule a couple of times to ensure the participants understand.

Begin the activity. Blow your whistle and start the timer. Most participants will use brute force against each other in order to win the game. A few savvy martial-arts practitioners may suddenly stop pushing and let a partner's momentum do the work of making him or her topple forward.

Stop the activity. After 17 seconds, blow your whistle and stop the activity.



Debriefing

Ask participants to think back on the experience and compare the different strategies used for winning.

Ask a volunteer to come forward for a quick strategy demonstration. Assume the initial face-to-face, palm-to-palm position. Blow the whistle and move your feet immediately. Tell the other person, "You've won! We still have 11 more seconds.

Would you mind moving your feet so I can win also?"

After the demonstration, participants may complain that you cheated. Point out that the rule set out at the beginning merely required you to make the other person move his or her feet within 17 seconds. Point out that there was no prohibition against moving your own feet.

Continue with the debriefing, bringing out learning points related to making assumptions, creating win-win solutions, modeling appropriate behaviors, managing conflicts, and the futility of meeting force with force.



Learning Points

1. *Winning* does not always require that someone lose.
2. A win-win solution to conflict is often preferable.
3. When participants stand face-to-face, confrontational approaches are encouraged.



Variations

Does the physical nature of the activity feel uncomfortable? Use *Jolt 12, First Touch*, which employs a similar approach to drive home the same point, but without physical confrontation.

Do you have an odd number of participants? It is fine to pair up with the participant who is left out.

Jolt 21

Not Fair

During our cultural diversity workshops, participants frequently ask us for a definition of the word *discrimination*. Instead of giving them a direct answer, we take them through this thought experiment. Only after they feel the concept in their guts do we supply them with the verbal definition: *Discrimination is the treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit.*



Synopsis

The facilitator walks the participants through a guided visualization process during which they relive an intense emotional impact of being treated unfairly. The facilitator relates these feelings with those aroused by discrimination.



Purpose

- To emotionally define the concept of discrimination.



Training Topics

- Discrimination
- Diversity
- Fairness



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 2 minutes for the activity, 2 minutes for debriefing.



Flow

Brief the participants. Explain that you are going to provide “an emotional definition” of the concept of discrimination. You will do this by conducting a delayed debriefing of a personal emotional experience from the past. Ask the participants to get ready to participate in a guided visualization exercise.

Conduct the activity. Instruct the participants to close their eyes and relax. Explain that you are going to guide them through a visualization exercise. Ask them to listen carefully to your instructions and follow them in their minds. Read these instructions:

Think of a time when you were treated unfairly.

- *If you recall several of these incidents, select the most intense one.*
- *If you feel that you were never treated unfairly, you are probably in a state of denial. Reach back further into your childhood and find something unfair that happened to you.*

Think of the answers to the following questions, focusing on your feelings. Don't be mature and understanding. Avoid intellectual analyses. Return to the time and the place. Relive the experience. Recall exactly how you felt. Pretend it is happening to you right now.

- *How do you feel? Sad? Obsessed? Anxious? Agitated? Disorganized? Miserable? Lost?*
- *How do you feel physically? Tense? Stressed out? Aching? Clenching your teeth? Shallow breathing? Sweating? Crying? A knot in your stomach? Exhausted? Sleepless? Lost your appetite? Tearful? Heavy?*
- *How do you feel about yourself? Damaged? Helpless? Hating your life? Hoping to die?*
- *Self-critical? Worthless? Empty? Like a failure? Sick? Guilty?*
- *How do you feel about the others? Abandoned? Alone? Exploited? Singled out?*
- *Friendless? Paranoid? Betrayed?*

Hold onto these feelings for several moments. (Pause for about 10 seconds.)

- *When I count down to one, please open your eyes and return to our location: Three, two, one.*
- *Take a deep breath. Let go of the negative feelings. You are among friends.*



Debriefing

Give a final instruction. Ask the participants to conduct one last exercise in their imaginations: *How would you feel if this type of unfair incident happened to you every day of your life?*

Explain the concept of discrimination. Tell the participants that what they experienced is how people feel when they are unfairly discriminated against. Share the dictionary definition of discrimination: *Discrimination is the treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit.* Invite the participants to compare this linguistic definition with the visceral definition that they experienced earlier.

Invite participants to share their experiences of unfair treatment. If appropriate, ask participants to share these experiences with people at their tables.



Learning Point

1. Everybody has been discriminated against and treated unfairly at one time or another.
2. Discrimination leaves long-lasting emotional scars.
3. There is a difference between feeling the pain of discrimination and talking about it



Variation

Worried about emotional backlash? Depersonalize the activity. Just talk to the participants about the exercise and ask them to imagine how the people who went through it would feel.

Jolt 22

One Dot, Two Dots

All jobs require making forecasts based on the data we collect. This jolt warns us against jumping to conclusions based on a single piece of data.



Synopsis

Ask the participants to draw a line passing through a single dot on a piece of paper. Help them discover that different people's lines go in different directions. Later, ask them to draw a line passing through two dots on the paper and discover that all lines go in the same direction.



Purpose

- To differentiate between single pieces of data and trends.



Training Topics

- Extrapolation
- Forecasting
- Trend Analysis



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 3 to 5 minutes for the debriefing.



Supplies

- Copies of the dotted paper, one sheet for each participant.
- Pencil or pen



Preparation

Prepare copies of paper with dots. Use a felt pen to place a dot in the middle of one side of a blank sheet of paper. Turn this sheet of paper over and place two dots diagonally about an inch apart on the other side. Make double-sided copies of this dotted paper.



Flow

Draw a line through the single dot. Ask the participants to turn the sheet of paper so the side with the single dot is facing up. Tell the participants to draw a straight line that passes through this dot.

Compare the directions of the lines. After a suitable pause, ask the participants if they can predict which direction the line will be headed on different pieces of paper. Let the participants compare their lines to discover that even though they all go through the dot, they go in different directions.

Draw a line through two dots. Ask the participants to turn over the sheet of paper to the side with two dots. Tell the participants to draw a straight line that passes through *both* dots.

Compare the directions of the lines. After a suitable pause, ask the participants if they can predict which direction the line will be headed on different pieces of paper. Let the participants compare their lines to discover that they all go in the same direction (because they go through both dots).



Debriefing

Begin the debriefing session with this explanation in your own words. Use a suitable example that will be relevant to the participants:

This activity demonstrates the difference between a single piece of data and a trend. The single dot represents one piece of data. We cannot predict in which direction the line will be headed. Similarly, with a single piece of data, we cannot forecast what is likely to happen in the future.

Here's an example: If you know that I ate salad for lunch today, you cannot confidently predict that I will be eating a salad for tomorrow's lunch also. However, if you know that I had salad for the last three days, you can conclude that I am probably going to have salad tomorrow also.

Here's another example: If one customer complains about our product, we probably need not take it seriously. However, if a dozen customers complain about our product, it's time to do something about it.

Invite the participants to come up with their own examples of single pieces of data and trends.



Learning Points

1. We cannot make predictions based on single pieces of data.
2. Our predictions will be more reliable if we base our decision on data trends.

Jolt 23

One Word

There are many valid ways to view the world. What you see depends not only on what is out there, but also what is inside in terms of your cultural and psychological values and styles. How you describe what you see is also influenced by several different factors.



Synopsis

The participants work silently and secretly to write a single word that describes what they see in a photograph. They compare these words and repeat the activity, trying to come up with a word that would be written by most people in the group. They conduct a debriefing discussion about their experience.



Purpose

- To explore the differences in what different people see in the same photograph.



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number

Best: 15 to 30



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- Pieces of paper
- Pens or pencils



Equipment

- Timer
- Whistle



Room Set Up

- Arrange seats around tables for groups of participants.



Preparation

Collect a set of picture postcards, preferably from different countries displaying different cultures. You will need one card for each table. These cards could all be the same or different from one another.



Flow

Get ready for the activity. Organize the participants into groups of 3 to 5. Seat them around a table. Place a photograph, printed side down, in the middle of the table.

Give instructions. Use your own words to explain this procedure.

I am imposing a gag order for the duration of this activity. When I blow the whistle, turn over the photograph so everyone can see it. Study the photograph and secretly write a single word to describe it. Write this word in big, block letters. You have 30 seconds to do this.

Write a word. Blow the whistle and repeat the instructions if necessary. Blow the whistle again at the end of about 30 seconds.

Share the words. Remind the participants to continue working silently. Ask them to show the word they wrote to each other.

Rewrite the word. Give this new set of instructions in your own words:

You are going to secretly write a single word related to the same photograph. Your challenge is to silently write a word that would be written by most others in your group. You may write the same word you wrote earlier; you may write a word written by someone else, or you may write a word that was not written earlier by anyone. Remember, your goal is to write a word that would be written by most people your group. You may not communicate with the others, except by telepathic means. You must not talk to the others or write them notes. Once again, you have 30 seconds to complete the task.

Signal the beginning of the task. Pause for 30 seconds and blow the whistle again.

Compare the words. Announce that you are lifting the gag order. Invite the participants to show their words and talk about them.



Debriefing

Conduct a discussion using the following types of questions:

1. *In the beginning, we all looked at the same photograph and followed the same set of instructions. However, we ended up with different words to describe the photograph. Why did this happen?*
2. *Do you feel there will be a difference between the words used by men and the words used by women? Why do you think so?*
3. *What word would you have selected if you were a person of the opposite gender? If you were a person from Timbuktu?*
4. *If we looked around the room and chose a single word to describe what we see, how much diversity do you expect among the words?*
5. *What if we asked people to select several words to describe the photograph? Will there be more overlap among the words?*
6. *During the second part of the activity, you tried to psych out what the other people are thinking that you are thinking about what they are thinking. What strategy did you use to accomplish this task?*
7. *What was the result of the second round? Did you succeed in using a word that was used by most other people? How did you feel about the result?*



Learning Points

1. Different people focus on different aspects of what they see. These individual differences are probably caused by several different factors.
2. When we try to think like other people, sometimes we succeed, and sometimes we fail.

Jolt 24

Pair Up!

An experiential activity is just an excuse for conducting a debriefing discussion. The real learning comes from the debriefing—not from the activity.

I don't have any empirical data to back up this statement, but it sounds profound. In my training sessions, I behave as if this is truly a profound and valid statement.



Synopsis

Ask the participants to pair up with a partner. Later, ask them to pair up with a new partner. When they complete this short and simple task, conduct a debriefing discussion to explore two-person partnerships.



Purpose

- To explore factors related to two-person relationships.



Training Topics

- Working with others
- Facilitation
- Debriefing
- Choosing Partners



Participants

Minimum: 6

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 6 minutes for the activity, 10-20 minutes for the debriefing.



Preparation

If you have an odd number of participants, select one person at random to act as an observer. Ask this person to wander around the room and watch what happens during the activity.



Flow

Find a partner. Ask the participants to pair up with a partner. Do not provide additional information. Pause while the participants organize themselves into pairs.

Regroup. After everyone has paired up, tell the participants to leave their current partner and find a new partner. As before, do not provide additional explanations.



Debriefing

Introduce the debriefing session. Ask the participants to reflect on their experience, come up with insights, and share them with the others.

Describe the format. Explain that you will ask several questions. After each question, you will pause briefly to permit each person to come up with one or more responses. When you blow the whistle after a pause, the participants will share their thoughts with the partner. Later, you will ask for volunteers to share any interesting, unexpected, and useful insights with the entire group.

Ask why? Ask the participants to think back on their earlier behavior and figure out why they chose the partner they chose. Also, ask them to think about how other people chose their partners.

Share the responses. Pause for about 20 seconds and blow the whistle. Ask the participants to share their responses with their partner.

Ask for volunteers. After a suitable pause, blow the whistle again. Ask for volunteers to share any interesting insights from their responses with the entire group. Wait until the volunteers have presented their insights.

Introduce responses from earlier participants. Tell the participants that you have a collection of responses from earlier groups about the choice of partners. Explain that you are going to present these responses, one at a time. You want each pair of participants to discuss how valid these responses are.

Present the list of responses. Give these responses, one at a time. As before, ask the participants to spend some time thinking about the validity of the response and then discuss the response. Finally, do a quick poll of how many people agree with the response and how many disagree.

- *Most participants pair up with people seated near them.*
- *Most participants pair up with people they already know.*
- *Most participants don't spend too much time deciding who they should pair up with.*
- *No participant refuses an invitation from someone else to pair up.*
- *Most participants pair up with attractive people.*
- *Most participants pair up with friendly people.*

Ask what-if questions. Explain that you are now going to describe some situations that are different from what they experienced earlier. Ask the participants, "If you are asked to pair up with another participant in each of the following situations, what would you do? What do you think the other people would do?" Present these situations:

- **Strangers.** *The participants in the group are strangers to each other. They have not met the other people before.*
- **Intact group.** *The participants in the group have been working with each other for a long time.*
- **Playing cards.** *Each participant is given a playing card from a shuffled deck. They are asked to use the card to find a partner.*
- **Systematic pairing.** *The facilitator assigns a partner to each participant. The facilitator does not explain the basis for pairing up people.*
- **Unexplained pairing.** *The facilitator assigns a partner to each participant. The facilitator clearly explains the basis for pairing up people.*

Ask for presentations. At the end of pausing for the discussion of each situation, welcome the participants to share any interesting insight with the rest of the group.

Ask what-if questions. Tell the participants that you are going to share some instructions given by an imaginary facilitator. Ask each participant, “What would you do if your facilitator gives each of the following instructions? What do you think the other participants would do?”

- **Competition.** *You will play a competitive game with another partner. Find someone to compete with.*
- **Cooperation.** *You will work with a partner to solve a problem. Find somebody to be your partner in this activity.*
- **Competency.** *You will work with a partner to solve a mathematical problem. Find somebody to be your partner in this task.*
- **Date of birth.** *Pair up with someone who has the same birthday (month and date, not the year) as you.*
- **Difference.** *Pair up with someone who is as different from you as possible.*
- **Similarity.** *Pair up with someone who is as like you as possible.*
- **Limited time.** *You have a 15-second time limit. Quick, pair up with another participant.*
- **Same gender.** *Pair up with someone of the same gender as you.*
- **Opposite gender.** *Pair up with someone of the opposite gender.*

Ask for presentations. At the end of pausing for the discussion of each imaginary instruction, invite the participants to share any interesting insights with the rest of the group.

Conclude the session. Point out to the participants that the debriefing discussions took more time than the activity. Explain that you learned a lot about two-person relationships by listening to their discussions and insights. Thank the participants for their contributions.



Learning Point

- Real learning comes not from an experiential activity, but from the debriefing discussion that follows it.



More...

To learn more about the power of debriefing, read Roger Greenaway’s articles and activities in <http://reviewing.co.uk>.

Jolt 25

Personality Profile

According to the Wikipedia, “The **Barnum effect**, also called the **Forer effect**, is the observation that individuals will give high accuracy ratings to descriptions of their personality that supposedly are tailored specifically for them but are, in fact, vague and general enough to apply to a wide range of people. This effect can provide a partial explanation for the widespread acceptance of some beliefs and practices, such as *astrology*, *fortune telling*, *graphology*, *aura reading* and some types of *personality tests*.”

I use this jolt, based on the Forer effect, as a part of a training workshop on critical thinking.



Synopsis

Administer a fake personality test based on the selection of three photographs. Send out the participants on a break while you pretend to analyze the test results. When the participants return, give everyone a folded piece of paper labeled “Confidential Personality Profile”. All the participants receive the same profile with vague general statements. Ask the participants to rate the accuracy of the profile.



Purpose

- To explore how the Forer effect dupes people into accepting vague general statements.



Participants

Minimum: 1

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 7 minutes for debriefing (with a break in the middle).



Supplies

- 10 picture postcards, displaying an assortment of different images
- Blank index cards



Handout

- Handout of *Confidential Personality Profile*, folded in half to hide the printed side (one copy for each participant)



Flow

Display 10 photographs. Place them in the middle of a table.

Select three cards. Ask the participants to stand around the table and study the different photographs. Tell each participant to individually select three images that most “resonate” with him or her. Encourage the participants to pick up the photographs to study them, but leave them on the table afterwards.

Describe the images. Give each participant a blank index card. Ask the participant to write down two words that describe each of the three photographs that he or she selected. Also, ask the participant to write a random four-digit number on the top right corner of the index card. Tell the participants to remember this number for later identification.

Prepare personality profiles. Send everyone out for a coffee break or a lunch break. Pick up a copy of the folded *Confidential Personality Profile*, copy the identification number from a participant’s card, and paper clip the card and the folded profile.

Study your profile. When the participants return from the break, ask them to pick up their *Personality Profile* by using their identification number (make it appear that each profile is different).

Rate the accuracy. Ask the participants to return to their seat and individually study their *Confidential Personality Profile*. After doing this, ask each participant to rate the accuracy of the profile using this 5-point scale:

- 1 – Extremely inaccurate
- 2 – Inaccurate
- 3 – Neither accurate nor inaccurate
- 4 – Accurate
- 5 – Extremely accurate

Count the number of accurate profiles. After a suitable pause, ask the participants who rated the profile 4 or 5 (*Accurate* or *Extremely Accurate*) to stand up. Count the number of people who are standing up.

Reveal the secret. Explain that all participants received the same personality profile.



Debriefing

Explain the Forer Effect. Debrief the group about the validity of various personal inventories (such as DISC, MBTI, or HBDI). Talk about the Forer Effect (or Barnum Effect).



Learning Point

- Individuals can be fooled into accepting personalized personality profiles if the statements are vague and general enough to apply to a wide range of people.



More...

Learn more about the Forer Effect (or Barnum Effect) by reading this article in Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnum_effect.

Confidential Personality Profile

Based on your selection and description of the three photo images, here are key elements of your personality:

You have a great need for other people to like and admire you. You have a tendency to be critical of yourself. You have a great deal of unused capacity that you have not turned to your advantage. While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them. Disciplined and self-controlled outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside. At times, you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations. You pride yourself as an independent thinker and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof. You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others. At times you are extroverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, reserved. Some of your aspirations tend to be unrealistic. Security is one of your major goals in life.

Jolt 26

Photo Analysis

Judgment has many useful purposes. We use judgment to decide how to spend our time, who to do business with, and for other crucial decisions in our lives. Developing the ability to make judgments in a balanced way is important. However, too much of a judgmental approach may cause us to miss important opportunities and experiences. This jolt demonstrates how reducing our judging impulses can widen our frames of reference.



Synopsis

Participants are shown a photograph projected on a screen and are asked to answer different versions of a questionnaire, one of which asks for a listing of everything they see and the other asking the participants to list only *interesting* things they see.



Purpose

- To explore how judgment narrows our point of view.



Training Topics

- Mindfulness



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 20



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 5-7 minutes for debriefing.



Handouts

- Two different versions of the Photo Analysis handout
(Prepare an equal number of copies of the two sets of instructions.)



Caution

Be careful not to reveal that there are two different versions of the instructions. To prevent this from happening, bring a single stack of alternating instructions rather than distributing the handouts from two separate stacks.



Equipment

- Laptop computer
- LCD projector
- Screen



Preparation

Create a slide that shows a cluttered scene with a lot of elements (for example, a busy street scene or a crowded railway station).



Flow

Distribute handouts. Begin the session by randomly distributing a copy of the instructions to each participant.

Project the photo. Project the slide and make sure that the slide is in focus.

Tell participants that this is an independent activity. Ask the participants to read the instructions and record their responses on the handout. Wait for about 2 minutes for the participants to complete the work.

Total the responses. Ask the participants to count the total number of responses they wrote down and invite them to call out their totals. The results will fall into two groups; those who were asked to write down *everything* will have a significantly longer list than those who were asked to write down only the *interesting* things.



Debriefing

Debrief the activity by revealing the two different sets of instructions. Ask questions to emphasize the learning point that any type of judgment (such as looking for *interesting* things) reduces what you pay attention to a situation. Also point out that extreme judgments (such as the *most interesting*) will narrow the field significantly.

Encourage participants to keep an open mind in new situations to ensure they see all aspects presented to them. Remind the participants that a mindful person observes the world without judgment and does not conclude that a situation is either *good* or *bad*.



Learning Points

1. Judging impacts our ability to be mindful.
2. Being judgmental affects our ability to make good decisions.
3. Being mindful means you keep an open mind in new situations.

Jolt 27

Ritual

As a teenager, if you ever desperately wanted to belong to a group but you were not permitted to do so, you know how it feels to be excluded. This jolt deals with the concept of exclusion (and inclusion) in groups.



Synopsis

A few participants are sent outside the room while teams of other participants are taught a secret ritual. These teams hold discussions while the outsiders (labeled as *anthropologists*) attempt to join the conversations.



Purpose

- To explore the feelings associated with excluding and including outsiders to an in-group.



Training Topics

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Teamwork



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number

Best: 20 to 30



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- Slide
- Whistle



Room Set-Up

- Chairs and tables pushed aside to permit stand-up conversations among members of each team.



Flow

Send the anthropologists outside the room. Estimate the number of participants. Form a group of about 20 percent of the participants (one person in every five) and ask them to stand up. Explain that they will play the role of anthropologists. Ask this panel of anthropologists to step outside the room and talk among themselves.

Form teams. Organize the rest of the participants into approximately equal-sized teams of two to seven participants.

Brief the team members. Project the slide that contains this message:

Team Ritual

Look at people, listen to them, and respond to what they say only if they have their left hands closed into loose fists and their right fingers spread open.

Explain details of the ritual. Demonstrate how your fingers are positioned. Tell the participants that they can hold their hands comfortably by their sides. They need to assume this ritual position only while they are talking. They should maintain this position when they are replying to someone else on their team.

Begin the discussions. Ask the members of each team to discuss their ideas for follow-up projects among the participants from this workshop. Close the slide.

Invite the anthropologists to join any team. While the teams are conducting their discussions, bring the anthropologists back into the room. Explain that the teams are discussing follow-up plans and invite them to join any team and take part in the discussion. Warn the anthropologists that the teams have a special ritual to show their respect to each other. To be accepted as a member of the team, this ritual has to be strictly observed.

Monitor the activity. Step aside and let the anthropologists try to join teams. Observe their behaviors and the behaviors of the team members. If any anthropologist asks you questions about the ritual, tell him or her to carefully observe what the team members are doing during the discussion.

Conclude the session. After about 3 minutes of discussion, blow the whistle and announce the end of the demonstration. Congratulate the anthropologists who have figured out the ritual. If no one has done so, thank the anthropologists for their valiant efforts.



Debriefing

Explain the ritual. Ask the members of the teams to demonstrate the ritual and explain how it is used.

Ask and discuss questions. Use the following types of questions:

- *How did the anthropologists feel about the team members?*
- *What unpleasant and frustrating things happened to the anthropologists?*
- *How did the team members feel about the anthropologists?*
- *What unpleasant and frustrating things happened to the team members?*
- *What was the most important thing that you learned from this activity?*
- *What types of turf battles are going on in your organization?*
- *How does this activity reflect what is happening in your organization?*
- *What are examples of people being excluded from some groups?*
- *What types of rituals are practiced in your organization?*
- *How did the anthropologists interact with each other?*
- *Based on what you learned from this activity, would you change any of your behaviors in the workplace?*
- *How can we make our workplace a more inclusive environment?*



Learning Points

1. Different people react in different ways when excluded from a group.
2. Excluding others from a group creates negative feelings.
3. Some group members feel guilty about excluding others.
4. There are subtle forms of exclusion in the workplace.



Variations

What if you have very few participants? You can conduct this activity with just three people: a team of two and one anthropologist. If you have only two participants, you can become a team member and ask one of the real participants to play the role of the anthropologist.

What if the anthropologists are extremely frustrated? Give them clues by joining different teams from time to time and carefully (but not blatantly) observing the ritual. Also request other participants to switch teams.

Related Jolts

- *Jolt 11. Exclusion* deals with the same topic but from a different angle.
- *Jolt 3. Birds of a Feather* provides a strong rationale for including people who are different as members of your team.

Jolt 28

Seven Words

Ever heard the cliché, “It’s not what you say, but how you say it”? The *Seven Words* jolt dramatically demonstrates this principle. My thanks to Ann Cook, from the American Accent Training program, a wonderful instructional designer.



Synopsis

Write a seven-word sentence that describes something about you. Read the sentence repeatedly, emphasizing different words. Point out how the meaning of a sentence changes as you change the emphasized words. Later, invite pairs of participants to explore this concept.



Purpose

- To explore the impact of word stress on the meaning of sentences.



Training Topics

- Communication
- Listening Skills



Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 20



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for the debriefing.



Supplies

- Pieces of paper
- Pencil or pen
- Flip chart
- Felt-tipped marker



Preparation

Practice with your sentence. Write a seven-word sentence. Practice saying that sentence repeatedly, emphasizing one word at a time. See the examples below.



Flow

Write a sentence. Write a seven-word sentence on a flip-chart page. Make it a personal sentence saying something about you.

Example: I enjoy designing and conducting training games.

Emphasize different words in the sentence. Say the sentence from the flip chart, stressing and emphasizing a different word each time. Ask the participants to comment on the message they heard from the way you said the sentence, going beyond the literal meaning of the words. Pause to collect a few interpretations.

Examples:

- **Emphasis:** *I* enjoy designing and conducting training games.
Possible interpretation: I am not talking about other people. I am talking about me.
- **Second version:** I *enjoy* designing and conducting training games.
Possible interpretation: Many game designers feel the activity to be frustrating. However, I find it pleasant.
- **Third version:** I enjoy *designing* and conducting training games.
Possible interpretation: There is something special about the act of creating a game.
- **Fourth version:** I enjoy designing *and* conducting training games.
Possible interpretation: It is not only the act of designing that is enjoyable. There is another thing.
- **Fifth version:** I enjoy designing and *conducting* training games.
Possible interpretation: I am not just an introverted designer. I also enjoy inviting the people to play the game and watching them.

- **Sixth version:** I enjoy designing and conducting *training* games.
Possible interpretation: I am not into trivial fun games. I am a serious games kind of guy who wants people to learn from the play.
- **Seventh version:** I enjoy designing and conducting training *games*.
Possible interpretations: I am not into boring training exercises. I want people to play interesting games.

Invite the participants to explore the idea. Ask each participant to write a seven-word sentence (it does not matter if the sentence is longer or shorter). After a suitable pause, ask the participants to pair up. Ask them to take turns to share different versions of their sentences and appropriate interpretations.



Debriefing

Conduct a debriefing discussion by asking these types of questions:

- The meaning of what you say changes depending on how you say it. What workplace examples do you have of this principle?
- How can you use this principle in your training activities?
- What precautions do you have to take in giving constructive feedback to others?
- Do you feel that people frequently misunderstand what you say? Could it be the way you say it?
- Do you think non-native speakers of English run into difficulties because they do not stress the key words?



Learning Points

1. The meaning of what you say depends not only on the words, but also on the tone, stress, emphasis, and intonation that you use.
2. The tone of our voice carries the emotional aspects of what we say.
3. We must pay attention not only to what we say, but how we say it.

Jolt 29

Talk-Speak

Language differences is a major obstacle to effective intercultural communication. Here is a jolt that enables you to experience the hesitation and the fear of making mistakes that people feel when speaking in a second language.



Synopsis

Invite a volunteer to make a presentation on any topic. Ask this person to double up on every verb by immediately following it with a synonym. Invite other participants to pair up and have a conversation, doubling up on all verbs. During the debrief, relate the experience with being preoccupied with words and sentence patterns of a second language.



Purpose

- To experience how it feels to speak in a non-native language.



Participants

Minimum: 5

Maximum: Any number

Best: 16 to 30



Time

- 5 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Flow

Ask for a volunteer to make a 3-minute presentation. Select someone who tends to show off. Bring this person to the front of the room and ask him or her to begin a presentation about something personal or work related (such as *The Story of My Life* or *My Most Successful Project*).

Shift to using *Doublese*. After about 15 seconds, stop the presentation and tell the presenter that he or she should continue the presentation in a special dialect called *Doublese*. Explain that the presenter should use English words and syntax, except all verbs must be immediately followed by a synonym.

Give an example. Say:

Let-permit me to explain-elucidate. Every time you use-employ a verb, you should-must immediately follow-succeed with a synonym of that verb that means-signifies the same thing like I am doing-performing right now. Get-understand it? Please continue-proceed to thrill-enthrall us with the rest of your presentation. If you forget-not remember to double-multiply your verbs, audience members will hiss-boo. Don't worry-get upset though, because they are just giving-providing you with friendly feedback.

Stop the presentation. After 3 minutes, stop the presentation. Thank the presenter and apologize for springing a surprise.

Conduct *Doublese* conversations. Ask all participants to pair up and hold a conversation in *Doublese* for the next 3 minutes on any topic. Stop the conversation at the end of 3 minutes.



Debriefing

Conduct a debriefing discussion. Ask the participants how they felt about speaking in *Doublese*. Continue with a series of questions to drive home the point that second language speakers of English (or any other language) should invest so much thought on the sentence structure and words that they become extremely self-conscious and unable to focus on the topic of conversation.



Learning Point

- Paying attention to words and sentence patterns distracts you from the message you are trying to communicate.

Jolt 30

Team Poker

If you focus on being a member of a winning team, you may not have the luxury of being able to establish relationships. The value you bring to your team depends on what the other team members have and what they need. The team may callously let you go if your resources are not aligned to their needs. Similarly, you may decide to dump the team and move on to another team that better suits your needs and appreciates your contributions. Is this what career management is all about?



Synopsis

Each participant receives a playing card from a shuffled deck. The participants organize themselves into teams of five and assemble the cards they have into a poker hand. The team with the most powerful poker hand wins.



Purpose

- To maximize your contribution to a team by aligning your value with the values and needs of the other team members.



Training Topics

- Coalition formation
- Collaboration
- Goal focus
- Popularity
- Trust and betrayal



Participants

Minimum: 6

Maximum: 50

Best: 15 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- A deck of playing cards
- Countdown timer
- Whistle



Handout

- Reference handout, *Ranks of Poker Hands* (one for each participant).



Flow

Distribute playing cards. Shuffle a deck of playing cards and give one card to each participant. Explain that the participants should hold onto their cards at all times during the activity. They may not exchange their cards with anyone else or give them away.

Brief the players. Explain that the participants will organize themselves into teams of five members. The team whose five cards represent the best poker hand wins. Ask the participants to raise their hands if they are familiar with the game of poker and the ranks of different poker hands. Explain that the participants need not know how to play poker in order to participate in this activity.

Distribute the reference handout. Give a copy of the handout with ranks for poker hands to each participant and invite everyone to become familiar with the ranks. Explain that they can refer to this handout throughout the activity.

Highlight the mechanics of the activity. The participants should organize themselves into teams of five and create a poker hand with the five playing cards they have. If the total number of players is not evenly divisible by five, some players will be left out. The participants may join or leave any team at any time if they have a chance of creating a better poker hand with other teammates.

Conduct a walk-around. Ask the participants to hold their cards in front of them and silently walk around the room so everyone can see who has which card. After about 30 seconds, blow the whistle and ask the participants to organize themselves into teams of five.

Announce a time limit. Tell the players that they have a tight time limit of 90 seconds to form teams with powerful poker hands. Start a countdown timer and announce when they have 60 seconds remaining, 30 seconds remaining, and 10 seconds remaining.

Conclude the session. Encourage the participants to keep their eyes open for better opportunities in other teams. At the end of 90 seconds, blow the whistle to indicate the end of the activity. Read the names of different poker hands listed in the handout, beginning with the lowest (*nothing*) hand. Find out which team has the most powerful hand. If more than one team has the same type of hand, explain that the hand with the highest card wins. Identify and congratulate the winning team.



Debriefing

To ensure reflection and sharing of insights, conduct a debriefing discussion. Use these types of questions:

- *How did you decide which team to join?*
- *Who took the lead in forming your team?*
- *Were you separated from people you like just because they did not have the right card?*
- *How did you reconcile maintaining relationships with winning?*
- *Did anyone reject your invitation to join your team? How do you feel about this person?*
- *Did you reject any participant who wanted to join your team? How do you feel about rejecting this person?*
- *How do you think the people who were left out feel?*
- *Did anyone try to entice you to leave your team and join another team where a more powerful poker hand could be created?*
- *How does this activity relate to what happens in your workplace?*
- *What was the impact of the tight time pressure on team formation?*
- *What would have happened if the winning team received a \$50 prize?*



Learning Points

1. Your value depends on what the other people bring to the team.
2. Sometimes, you may have to let go of a friend in order to win the game.
3. If we focus only on winning, we are easily tempted to leave one team and join another one that has better opportunities.
4. Team members feel betrayed when someone leaves their team to join another team.



Variations

Want to add more excitement? Announce a \$50 cash prize for the winning team. Watch how the team members distribute the prize money.

What if you don't want to use playing cards? Distribute cards with letters of the alphabet. Ask the participants to organize themselves into teams of any size. The team with the longest English word wins.

What if you don't have enough participants? Give two cards to each participant.

Ranks of Poker Hands

Value of cards

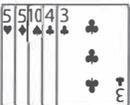
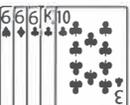
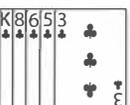
Here are 13 cards in each suit, arranged from the highest to the lowest:

Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, Ace

Notice that an Ace can be counted either as the highest or the lowest card.

Values of Poker Hands

Here are the nine different types of poker hands, from the lowest (*Nothing*) to the highest (*Straight Flush*):

HAND	SAMPLE
<p>Nothing. None of the five cards has a value that matches the value of another card. Also the cards are of different suits. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>nothings</i>, the player with the highest card wins. For example, a hand with A♣ – Q♦ – 9♥ – 8♠ – 2♦ beats the sample hand (on the right).</p>	
<p>One Pair. This hand contains two cards of the same value and three other odd cards. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>pairs</i>, the value of the paired cards determines who wins. For example, a hand that contains a 6♣ – 6♠ pair beats the sample hand. If both players have pairs of the same value, then the hand with the highest card among the other three cards wins.</p>	
<p>Two Pairs. This hand contains a pair of cards of the same value, another pair of cards of a different value, and an odd card. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have two pairs, the value of the higher pair determines who wins. For example, a hand with a 8♦ – 8♣ pair (and another pair) beats the sample hand. If both players have higher pairs of the same value, then the hand with the higher second pair wins. If these pairs also match, then the hand with highest odd card wins.</p>	
<p>Three of a Kind. This hand contains three cards of the same value and two odd cards. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>three-of-a-kind</i> hands, the value of the higher three of a kind determines who wins. For example, a hand with K♦ – K♠ – K♥ beats the sample hand.</p>	
<p>Straight. This hand contains five cards in sequence, but not of the same suit. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>straights</i>, then the value of the card on top of the straight determines who wins. For example, a hand with J♥ – 10♣ – 9♥ – 8♠ – 7♦ – 6♣ beats the sample hand shown on the right.</p>	
<p>Flush. This hand contains five cards of the same suit, not in sequence. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>flushes</i>, then the value of the highest card determines who wins. For example, a hand with A♥ – 10♥ – 7♥ – 3♥ – 2♥ loses to the sample hand.</p>	
<p>Full House. This hand contains three cards of the same value and two of another. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>full houses</i>, then the value of the set of three cards determines who wins. For example, a hand with J♠ – J♥ – J♣ – 7♥ – 7♦ – beats the sample hand.</p>	
<p>Four of a Kind. This hand contains four cards of the same value and an odd card. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have <i>four-of-a-kind</i> hands, then the value of the set of four cards determines who wins. For example, a hand with 5♠ – 5♥ – 5♦ – 5♣ – 5♠ beats the sample hand.</p>	
<p>Straight Flush. This hand contains five cards of the same suit, in sequence. <i>Tie breaker:</i> If two players have straight flushes, then the value of the highest card in the sequence determines who wins. For example, a hand with 10♠ – 9♠ – 8♠ – 7♠ – 6♠ beats the sample hand.</p>	

Jolt 31

Ten Sentences

If you watch what I am doing right now, you may say, “He is typing on a keyboard attached to a laptop computer.”

Or you may say, “He is writing an article about a game with photo cards.”

Or you may say, “He is wasting his time.”

These are different ways to talk about the same behavior. In this jolt, we focus on the three ways of *describing*, *inferring*, and *evaluating*. The statements in the earlier example reflect these three ways.



Synopsis

The participants write 10 sentences about what they see in a photograph. Later, they classify the sentences into descriptions, inferences, and evaluations. During the debriefing discussion, they compare these three categories.



Purpose

- To explore three different types of statements that people make about what they see.



Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: Any number

Best: 15 to 30



Time

- 4 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- Pieces of paper
- Pens or pencils



Equipment

- Timer
- Whistle



Room Set up

- Arrange seats around tables for groups of participants.



Preparation

Collect a set of picture postcards, preferably from different countries displaying different cultures. You will need one card for each table. These cards could all be the same or different from one another.



Flow

Get ready for the activity. Organize the participants into groups of 3 to 5. Seat them around a table. Place a photograph, printed side down, in the middle of the table.

Give instructions. Use your own words to explain this procedure.

When I blow the whistle, turn over the photograph so everyone can see it. Study the photograph and secretly write 10 sentences about what you see in it. Keep each of these sentences short, and make sure that each sentence is different from the others. You have 2 minutes to complete this task.

Write 10 sentences. Blow the whistle and repeat the instructions if necessary. Blow the whistle again at the end of 2 minutes. Announce the end of the activity and ask the participants to stop writing.



Debriefing

Explain the three categories. Use the information below to define the categories of *description*, *inference*, and *evaluation*. Illustrate each category with a sample sentence related to the photograph.

Description: Your sentence is an objective statement about some aspect of what you see in the photograph. You act like a behavioral scientist or an anthropologist and stick to the facts about what you see. Example: The man on the left side of the photograph wears a blue cap.

Inference: Your sentence goes beyond what is visible and presents a conclusion based on the photograph. Example: It is a hot day, and the man does not like the sun shining on his bald head.

Evaluation: Your sentence contains an inference with some value judgment attached to it. Example: All people in the photograph have a cynical look.

Classify the sentences. Ask each participant to work independently and label his or her sentences with a D, I, or E to indicate whether it is primarily a description, inference, or evaluation. Pause while the participants complete this task.

Conduct a debriefing discussion. Use the following types of questions:

- *Can you give a sample of a sentence that is purely descriptive?*
- *Can you give a sample sentence that is primarily inferential?*
- *Can you give a sample sentence that is primarily evaluative?*
- *To what category do most of your sentences belong?*
- *Which type of sentence is the easiest to write?*
- *Under what conditions are you likely to write inferences? Evaluations?*
- *What could be the disadvantages of coming up with inferences? Evaluations?*
- *What types of sentences do you frequently use in describing people from other countries and cultures?*



Learning Points

1. You can make statements about what you see in descriptive, inferential, and evaluative categories.
2. Descriptive statements are the most objective. Inferences involve coming up with conclusions. Evaluations involve making judgments.
3. People often make inferences and evaluations when describing objects and experiences from other countries and other cultures.



Variations

Are you technologically sophisticated? Instead of using photo cards, project a photographic slide on a large screen. Ask all participants to write their sentences about this image.

Want to increase the complexity? Play a short video recording (example: a brief excerpt from a soap opera from a different country). Ask the participants to write their sentences about what they viewed.

Play Sample

Here's the photograph at the center of the table:



Here are the 10 sentences written by Prema, one of participants in the group:

1. A shy girl is hiding behind the others.
2. There are three boys in the picture.
3. The teacher is standing in the back.
4. The teacher has the class under control.
5. The blackboard is green in color.
6. One of the girls in the front is showing off.
7. The children are subdued.
8. The children are wearing uniform.
9. The teacher is worried.
10. Various pieces of paper are hanging from the wall.

During the debrief, Prema categorized her sentences as 5 descriptions, 3 inferences, and 2 evaluations.

Review the photograph and categorize the sentences. How does your classification compare with Prema's?

Jolt 32

Values

Which of these two values is more important among the employees in your organization:

- Integrity
- Customer focus

Yes, you are right: Both of them are important. And comparing these two values is like comparing apples with oranges.

However, thinking about these values, discussing them, and placing them in a priority order makes them more specific and easier to implement.



Synopsis

The participants identify the highest-priority value among a set of employee values by comparing them two at a time.



Purpose

- To explore the relative importance of different employee values in an organization.



Training Topics

- Implementing values
- Values clarification



Participants

Minimum: 10

Maximum: Any number

Best: 15 to 30



Time

- 4 minutes for the activity, 3 minutes for debriefing.



Supplies

- Values cards from the Employee Values list (see Preparation section below)
- Countdown timer
- Whistle



Room Set-Up

Set up a mediator's area. Place a few chairs in this area and ask the participants not to sit in this area. Explain that you will send mediators to this area later in this activity.



Preparation

Prepare values cards. Use the list of employee values on the list following this activity. Copy each value on a separate card. Prepare one card fewer than the number of participants in your group. If you have more than twenty participants, add some more values of your own choice or create a few duplicate cards.



Flow

Select a mediator. Randomly select one participant to be the mediator. Ask this person to go to the Mediation Area.

Distribute the value cards. Give a value card to each of the other participants.

Explain the goal. Tell the participants that each card contains a value that should guide the employees of the organization. While all these values are important, the goal of this activity is to locate the one value that everyone should immediately focus on. Announce a 3-minute time limit for making this selection.

Ask participants to pair up and select. Tell the participants to pair up with each other and show their value cards, briefly talk about them, and decide which value is of higher priority.

Explain what to do after the selection. The participant who had the value card that was not selected should give this card to the facilitator. He or she will then go to the Mediator's Area. The other participant should return to the main play area and pair up with someone else as soon as possible.

Explain how mediation works. If a pair of participants cannot decide which value has higher priority, they should go to a mediator. Participants should take turns briefly presenting their arguments to the mediator. The mediator should listen to arguments and quickly decide which value should receive higher priority.

Explain what happens after the mediation. The two participants who presented their cases should give their cards to the mediator and go to the Mediator's Area. The mediator should give the lower-priority value to the facilitator and go to the main play area with the higher-priority value and pair up with any available participant.

Continue the selection process. Ask the participants with value cards to repeatedly pair up with new partners and continue the decision-making process.

Conclude the session. If at any time during the activity, there is only one player with a value card, announce the end of the activity. Read the value on the card and declare it to be the highest priority value.

If there is more than one person with a value card at the end of 3 minutes, blow the whistle and get everyone's attention. Ask the people with value cards to stand at different parts of the room and to each read the value on his or her card. Ask the rest of the participants to stand near the person with the value that they consider to be of the highest priority. Identify the value with the majority of participants and declare it to be the highest-priority item.



Debriefing

Focus on the selected value. Acknowledge that there are several important values. Explain that you are going to focus on the one value that was rated the highest priority. Ask and discuss the answers to the following types of questions:

- *What are the benefits of implementing this value?*
- *How would you rate the current level of implementation of this value among our employees?*
- *What would happen if this value were ignored or violated?*
- *How can we incorporate this value in our everyday activities in the workplace?*
- *How can we increase the awareness and acceptance of this value among all employees.*



Learning Points

1. There are several important values that should be embraced by all employees.
2. It is easier to select between two values than among several values at the same time.
3. Discussing different values and deciding among them makes people better understand the importance of the values and the costs associated with implementing them.
4. Your personal priorities among values may be different from those of other people.



Variations

Not enough participants? Retain only one mediator. Give a different value card to the participant whose value was rated at a lower level of priority and ask him or her pair up with someone else.

Don't like our list of values? No problem. Create your own list.

Want to change the focus? Instead of selecting among employee values, you may select among organizational values (such as protecting the environment, being a responsible corporate citizen, and paying your share of taxes).

Reference

Simon, S.B., Howe, L.W., & Kirschenbaum, H. (1995). *Values clarification*. New York: Warner Books.

Employee Values

Accountability	Exploration	Playfulness
Accuracy	Fairness	Pragmatism
Achievement	Flexibility	Preparedness
Adventure	Fluency	Professionalism
Agility	Freedom	Punctuality
Altruism	Friendliness	Purpose
Assertiveness	Frugality	Reliability
Autonomy	Genuineness	Realism
Balance	Gratitude	Resilience
Calmness	Growth	Resourcefulness
Caring	Happiness	Respect
Carefulness	Hard work	Safety
Challenge	Harmony	Security
Cheerfulness	Helpfulness	Self-control
Collaboration	Honesty	Self-esteem
Commitment	Humor	Self-reliance
Competition	Inclusion	Simplicity
Confidence	Independence	Skillfulness
Conformity	Individuality	Speed
Consistency	Innovation	Spontaneity
Cooperation	Integrity	Stability
Courage	Justice	Structure
Courtesy	Knowledge	Support
Creativity	Learning	Sympathy
Curiosity	Logic	Synergy
Democracy	Love	Teamwork
Dependability	Loyalty	Thoughtfulness
Determination	Mindfulness	Tolerance
Directness	Modesty	Trust
Discipline	Open-mindedness	Truth
Diversity	Optimism	Uniqueness
Empathy	Order	Unity
Endurance	Originality	Variety
Energy	Patience	Vitality
Enthusiasm	Persistence	Zest

Jolt 33

Wobegon

The radio host of the popular National Public Radio show *Prairie Home Companion*, Garrison Keillor, claims that all the children in the mythical town of Lake Wobegon are above average. Clearly, this is mathematically impossible to support. But Keillor's underlying social commentary reflects the reality that we all tend to overestimate our own talents, abilities, and accomplishments and underestimate the same qualities in others. This is a jolt that uses this human foible to make its learning points.



Synopsis

Participants individually rate their own listening abilities and the listening skills of others. They compute the average score for both sets and discover this totally human outcome.



Purpose

- To increase our awareness that we tend to overestimate our skills and accomplishments and underestimate the same qualities in others.



Training Topics

- Self-image
- Communication
- Critical thinking



Participants

Minimum: 5

Maximum: Any number

Best: 10 to 30



Time

- 3 minutes for the activity, 5 minutes for the debriefing.



Supplies

- Small pieces of paper
- Pens or pencils
- Flip chart
- Felt-tipped markers



Preparation

Compute the basic statistics. Find out the number of participants attending the session. Calculate 25 percent of this number.



Flow

Obtain personal ratings. Invite participants to rate their behaviors associated with this statement:

I listen very carefully to what the others say.

Ask participants to use this rating scale:

- 10 – always
- 9 – very frequently
- 8 – usually
- 7 – often
- 6 – sometimes
- 5 – occasionally
- 4 – once in a while
- 3 – seldom
- 2 – rarely
- 1 – never

Ask each participant to anonymously write down the appropriate self-rating number on a small piece of paper, then fold it and give it to you.

Obtain ratings of other people's behavior. Now ask each participant to think of the listening behaviors of other participants (who are attending your session) and rate them using the same rating scale and the same procedure as used in the previous self-rating exercise.

Compute the averages. With the help of the participants, quickly calculate the average value of both the self-rating task and the task of rating of others.

Display the averages. Draw a line like this on a flip-chart page:

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

Mark the averages for the self-ratings with an “S” and the “others” ratings with an “O” on the appropriate locations on this line.



Debriefing

It is very likely that you will find the average self-rating to be greater than the average scores for “others.” Ask the participants to take a moment to reflect on the implications of this discrepancy.

After a short pause, discuss participants’ insights about self-evaluation. Ask probing questions to enable participants to discover our tendency to overestimate ourselves and to underestimate others.

Ask participants to brainstorm different strategies for jointly raising the average listening skills of everyone in the group. Encourage the participants to be accountable for ensuring that the group’s improved average reflects new learning gained during this activity.



Variation

Are you interested in exploring other human tendencies and abilities? Instead of asking for estimates of our ability to listen carefully, you might work on other variables such as goal focus, punctuality, accountability, giving feedback, praising others, and participating in discussions.