

The Best Workshop Ever

Collaborative Skill: Norm Development

Focus: Creating group norms

Materials: Paper and pen for each small group, large paper (flip chart, butcher paper, poster board) and markers

Sequence: Social Agreement

Sources: Unknown

Suggested Procedure

1. Break the larger group in smaller groups of four to six people.
2. Have each group assign a scribe.
3. Tell the participants that they are to brainstorm something for 2 minutes. Rules for brainstorming are:
 - * Write down every idea even if you don't agree with it or like it
 - * Do not discuss or evaluate ideas
 - * The idea is to get as many ideas down as possible
4. They are to brainstorm the following:
"Think about this workshop. What can we do to make this the worst workshop ever?" Write down as many ideas as possible.
5. After the 2 minutes, ask the groups to categorize their list into the following:
 - * Those items that no one has control over (e.g. weather)
 - * Those items that only the facilitator(s)/teacher(s) have control over
 - * Those items that everyone has control over
6. Ask them to focus on the items that everyone has control over. Have them choose two or three from the list that they will "flip" around. For example, if they wrote, "be disrespectful," they would flip it to "be respectful."
7. Then ask them to choose one or two from the facilitator list to do the same. For example, if they wrote, "be boring", they flip it to "be exciting".
8. Have each group share out their flipped "**everyone**" ideas and write them on a large piece of paper titled "**The Best Workshop Ever.**"
9. Then have each group share out their changed **facilitator** ideas and write them on a different large piece of paper.
10. It is now time to negotiate. Inform participants that these are going to be the ground rules (or social agreement) that will be used in the workshop. The idea is to make the workshop a place where everyone has the opportunity to learn. As they can see, some of the responsibility for creating this environment belongs to the facilitator, and some of it belongs to the everyone.

Ask the group as a whole to evaluate what is on the flip chart papers. Are they reasonable? If not, how can they be modified to be reasonable? An example is the "be exciting" item. Excitement is a relative term, and it isn't possible to always be exciting. How can I, as the as the facilitator, realistically help to make the workshop more engaging? As a group, you may agree to having the facilitator pay attention to pacing and variety.

11. Define terms that may be very broad: e.g. what does "be respectful" mean? Write down key words suggested by students next to it.

12. Add any items that may be missing, yet important. A few ideas are:
- * Work out differences nonviolently
 - * Encourage each other
 - * Work toward group and individual goals
 - * Laugh with, rather than at, others
 - * Be aware of biases and “isms”
 - * Be safe physically and emotionally
 - * Help each and all succeed
13. Check in with the community agreements periodically (early on at least once/day ... later 1-2 times/week) to evaluate how things are going, and even add or modify agreements.

Sample Processing Questions

- How can we work together to make this the “best workshop ever”? What do we need to do or be aware of?
- Why do you think we share responsibility to make the workshop work?
- How shall we handle it if someone keeps going against the social agreements? How can we be compassionate and fair while holding people accountable? This is not about punishment, but about trying to help everyone succeed; so how can we work with someone rather than do things to them?