

ACTIVITY: Tell Me A Story About Something You Are Wearing (or in your pocket)

TIME: 15-20 minutes

DESIGNED FOR: Pairs

NEEDS: Nothing

Description: This activity, which has three rounds, is an excellent ice breaker, *and* it's engaging way to begin building storytelling comfort and confidence among participants. The exercise also helps participants learn how to focus a short personal story, practice active listening to others' stories, and understand the responsibility of sharing someone else's story.

Setup: Ask participants to find a partner; this works best in pairs of 2, and will work with groups of 3, if numbers aren't even.

Instructions:

1. *Round 1:* Explain to the participant pairs that they will have 2 minutes to introduce themselves to each other and decide who is going first. Each storyteller then has 2 minutes to tell a story about something they are wearing or is in their pocket. After two minutes, the partners switch, so the storyteller becomes the listener. This pattern continues each round. The facilitator keeps track of time, and lets participants know when it's time to switch storytellers. The facilitator also can give a 1 minute warning. The facilitator does not give participants advance warning that there will be 3 rounds.
2. *Round 2:* Switch partners. Again, participants have 2 minutes to introduce themselves to their new partner and decide who goes first. The storytellers now have to tell their *new* partners the same story about something they are wearing or is in their pocket, but this time they only have 1 minute to tell it – and they must tell it in a way that makes it memorable, so memorable that their partner will never forget it. The facilitator keeps time, and lets participants know when it's time to switch storytellers; the facilitator alerts that they will not give a 30-second, midway warning this time. (In this round, the storyteller often focuses their story more, zeroes in on a specific detail, or remembers something more from the story — and often goes deeper.) Sometimes they talk louder and faster, or try to be more descriptive, if they are more nervous.)
3. *Round 3:* Switch partners, final time. Again, participants have 2 minutes to introduce themselves to their new partners and decide who goes first. This time, though, the storytellers have 1 minute to *re-tell* their partners one of the two previous stories (aka someone else's story) that they heard. The partner does the same. The facilitator again keeps time, and lets participants know when to switch storytellers. There is a chance that one or both partners could hear their own story told back to them; that is OK.
4. Debrief as a large group about the experience: What did they learn about their own storytelling between Rounds 1 and 2; what was different, if anything, between those two rounds? What was it like to tell someone else's story in Round 3? And, if anyone heard their own story in Round 3, what was that like or what did they learn from hearing it retold?