

Imagination and Brainstorming Bring Immediate Results

Imagine going into a conference session where the facilitator doesn't show up! Have you ever found yourself waiting, wondering if the facilitator would ever show? Most of us want to leave the session and try to catch another one before we miss too much. You'll never run into that situation at the North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA). We decided to create our own games and share.

We brainstormed areas of interest for which we could create games. Some of the suggestions were: negotiations, conflict, customer service, stress, etc. We narrowed the topics down twice to get to two topics: Conflict and Stress. Since there were 16 people in the session, we split into two groups of eight. Then we set out to create the games.

My group had the topic "conflict." And, actually, there was more conflict creating the game than in the game itself...not really, but close. It was a challenging assignment since we had only 20 minutes and were allowed to use only what was in the room to create and play the game.

"I'm Right!"*

Goal

Participants will identify the major factors and elements of conflict.

Group Size

Two to forty, split into teams (teams of 3-6 seem to work best)

Materials

- A random object
- Several coins
- Newsprint, markers

Procedure

Assemble the participants in a circle or around a table. Place any object in the middle where everyone can see it. Tell the participants that the object before them is not what it appears to be. They must invent a new identity and use for the object – anything other than what it really is. Give them 30 seconds. Ask each participant to state his/her version of what the object is and post this version on newsprint for reference.

Explain that they have five minutes to convince the other participants that their explanation of the object is correct. Encourage them to argue their perspective forcefully if necessary.

While the discussion is in progress, the facilitator should walk around and randomly give participants a coin. The value of the coins, and the times they are given, should be unpredictable. You can also take coins away from a player if you like.

After the five minute time period, lead a discussion.

Discussion Questions

- What were some of your emotions as you tried to convince others of your point of view?
- What did you think about your ability to convince others?
- At what point did you feel most frustrated? Most successful?
- What interesting things did you see other players doing?
- What surprised you about how others played?
- At what point was the level of conflict most intense?
- What factors contributed to the level of conflict?
- What strategies or coping methods did players use to deal with conflict?
- What are both the positive and negative aspects of conflict?
- In what ways does this game mirror conflict in real life?
- What was the significance of giving coins to players?
- If the coins were a metaphor, what would they symbolize in real life?
- How would you play the game differently the next time?
- What if players didn't receive any coins?
- What is one thing you might do differently in your work or professional life after playing this game?
- What are the three most important things you've learned about conflict from this game?

Pocketfuls of Stress*

Overview

This exercise is designed to help participants look at both the symbols of stress and the actual stressors in their lives. The exercise ends with a jolt that helps people redefine their symbols of stress and their definitions of stress. Suggested Time: 30-40 minutes.

Group Size

Five to forty, split into teams (teams of 4-6 seem to work the best)

Materials Needed

- One marker per person (at least one per team minimum)
- Several sheets of flipchart paper per team

Procedure

1. Divide participants into teams of 4-6. Arrange them around a round table or some other setup where they can all see each other and the materials they will be using.
2. Place the flipchart paper on the tables so participants can write or doodle directly on the larger sheets of paper. If the room setup won't allow this, provide an easel with flipchart paper for each team.
3. Ask each participant to empty their pockets and bags of their personal items and place them on the table for all to see. Note: Some participants may be hesitant to disclose some items. Be sensitive to this, but encourage them to play along.
4. Ask each team to discuss the sources of stress they see represented in front of them. Allow about five minutes.
5. Begin to capture the items (sources of stress) and the stress they symbolize on the flipchart paper. For example, a cell phone may symbolize always being accessible.
6. Have the team look for commonalities among the items on the table. (Alternatively, you could save that conversation for the debrief.)

7. Provide a short lecturette about stress and the fact that it is typically thought of as a negative thing (distress) and that there is actually positive stress (eustress).
8. Have the group create new positive values for the items on the table – to re-symbolize the items.
9. Debrief the exercise. Use the Discussion Questions provided as a starting point; however, add additional questions to address your specific needs and/or learning objectives.)

Discussion Questions

- What observations do you have regarding this exercise?
- What happened as you began the process of looking at your items?
- Did asking you to empty your pockets cause you to feel stressed?
- Do you have any new thoughts regarding how what you carry with you each day impacts the level of stress you feel? If so, what are they?
- What comes to mind when you think of stress?
- Do you ever think of stress in positive terms? If so, when?
- Do the symbols of stress that you carry have any different meaning for you now?
- How can this experience be of value to you at work?

**Note: This exercise was designed and initially played by participants at the 2001 NASAGA Conference.*

(The North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA) is a growing network of professionals working on the design, implementation, and evaluation of games and simulations to improve learning results in all types of organizations. NASAGA believes in the value of learning gained through experience and feels that games and simulations, appropriately designed and conducted are an extremely useful (and underused) tool for creating this rich learning.

NASAGA's primary mission is to facilitate the use of simulations and games and to spread the principles and procedures of interactive, experiential approaches to education, training, management, problem solving, and decision making.

If you have questions about NASAGA, about membership or the conference, you can send an email to info@nasaga.org or call NASAGA toll free at 888.432.GAME (in the US), or 317.387.1424.)

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