

# AND NOT BUT

The And Not But activity helps us to reflect on the simple words we use to communicate, and how these can impact a conversation. "But" is an interesting word in communication. It is a minimizing word that detracts from, and qualifies, the statement before it. By replacing the word "but" with "and," communication can have a more positive and powerful feel. Our choice of words and responses can frame a conversation and help us to communicate more effectively.



10-15 minutes



Minimum of 2



None

Source: Adapted from multiple sources

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

In both planning sessions you were using the word "yes."

- How did it feel when you were planning your trip using "yes, but?" Now, how did it feel when you were planning your trip using "yes, and?"
- Did you feel the flow of the conversation change when you used "and" instead of "but?" If yes, how did it change?
- How can we change our language and framing around issues to communicate more effectively in health care?
- Where can you embed this change in your day-to-day work or activities? What's one thing you could try in the coming week?

By replacing the word "but" with "and," communication can have a more positive and powerful feel. "But" often acts as a minimizing word that detracts from, and qualifies, the statement before it.



1. In partners, plan a vacation with one partner using only “yes, but” after each statement.
2. One partner will start the conversation with a statement and then the second partner will follow with a statement starting with “yes, but.” For example:
  - Partner 1: We are going on a trip to Hawaii and we are going to go to Maui.
  - Partner 2: Yes, but I can’t go next week as I have a work meeting.
  - Partner 1: That’s okay – we can switch the time.
  - Partner 2: Yes, but I don’t like Hawaii.
3. After a few minutes of planning your trip using “yes, but,” switch and repeat the exercise above using nothing but “yes, and.”
4. One partner will start the conversation with a statement and then the second partner will follow with a statement starting only with “yes, and.” For example:
  - Partner 1: We are going on a trip to Hawaii and we are going to go to Maui.
  - Partner 2: Yes, and we are going to go to the beach every day.
  - Partner 1: Yes, and we are going to go snorkelling.
5. After a few minutes of planning your trip using “yes, and”, debrief on the language used and how it felt using “and” versus “but.”

# BLINDFOLD

In this activity, blindfolded participants must rely on their partners to navigate an obstacle course successfully. The activity is designed to help improve communication and listening skills, and to build trust between partners.



15-20 minutes



10-50



- A large private room
- Enough blindfolds for half of the participants
- Furniture and other items to use as obstacles

Source: Adapted from Mindtools

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How did participants have to communicate differently to guide their partners?
- How did their listening skills change and adapt when they were blindfolded?
- What did it feel like to give up control and trust your partner?
- How could you apply this learning/experience in your work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Scatter furniture and objects around the room before the activity begins. Your course should be challenging, but still safe to navigate.
2. Put team members into pairs and ask them to stand together at one end of the room.
3. One person from each pair should put on a blindfold.
4. The sighted people must verbally guide their partners across the room by giving them instructions to help them avoid the obstacles and other people.
5. When each team reaches the other side of the room, partners should switch roles and then repeat the exercise.

# BUILDING BLOCKS

This activity develops descriptive and instructional skills as well as teamwork.



30-45 minutes



4-24



2 identical building block sets for each participating group

*Source: Adapted from LiveStrong*

## **DEBRIEF** *(following the activity)*

Based on the role you had in the activity:

- What was the hardest part of this activity?
- What was the easiest part of this activity?
- As the observer in the activity, what suggestions would you make?
- What did you learn as a team?
- What communication strategies could be embedded into this activity to ensure greater success for the team?
- How was the activity different the second time around?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Organize attendees into groups of four.
2. Each group member will choose one of the following four roles: the director, the runner, the builder, or the observer.
3. The director and builder will be located on opposite sides of the room with their backs to each other, each with their own set of building blocks.
4. The facilitator will ask the directors to build something with their blocks.
5. The director must then give instructions to the runner, who must relay those instructions to the builder in an attempt to have the builder create an exact replica of the director's blocks.
6. The observer should observe the activities of the builder, runner and director without commenting aloud.
7. The activity is limited to ten minutes.
8. Once the builders have completed their structures, have the rest of the group come over to the builders' side of the room for debriefing.
9. Following the debrief, run the activity a second time, using the same method and team members in the same roles. Once the builders have completed their second structures, have the team come over to the builders' side of the room for debriefing.

# BUILDING TOGETHER

The Building Together activity encourages teams to work together to design and develop a structure using collaboration and teamwork. The goal is for the team to build the tallest freestanding tower with the limited materials provided. Take risks, be creative, and try new things!



30 minutes



Maximum of 40, plus 1-2 judges



Each team of 4 requires:

- 20 pieces of spaghetti
- 1 large marshmallow
- 1 metre of string
- 1 metre of tape
- 1 small brown paper bag

Source: Unknown

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

This activity encourages critical thinking by asking team members to work together in a short period of time while using limited supplies. Teams must demonstrate quick decision-making, execute a plan, and show resilience in the face of challenges and frustrations. This has a strong parallel to teams in health care who must also work together and show resilience in the face of challenges.

After the winning team is announced, ask participants these questions:

- What was the hardest part of this activity?
- What was the easiest part of this activity?
- What did you learn?
- What would you do differently if you had a chance to rebuild the tower?
- What lessons from this activity can we apply to our work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. In groups of four, each team will be asked to build a structure using basic materials (see resources list).
2. You have 15 minutes to build the tallest freestanding structure with only the materials provided.
3. Once 15 minutes have elapsed, all teams must not touch their structures. The facilitator will measure each tower and record the highest height.
4. The winner of the activity is whichever team has the tallest freestanding structure at the point of final measurement.

# CAMPFIRE

Much of what we learn is through storytelling. Campfire is an informal exercise that helps participants develop diplomacy and teamwork skills through trial and error, and by sharing successes and failures. The purpose of the activity is to reveal commonalities through shared experiences.



30-60 minutes



4-8



- Post-it notes
- Markers

Source: Adapted from Gamestorming

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

As the facilitator for Campfire, your role is to encourage storytelling and experience sharing. The point of the activity is for participants to hear each other's stories, encourage sharing and help to highlight similarities in experience.

- What did you have in common with your team?
- Are there any themes that arose from each story?
- What did you not have in common?
- What did you learn about your team members?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Before the meeting, come up with ten words that can be used as trigger words to start the storytelling. Try to keep the words positive or neutral: happy, work travel, ideas, work, opportunity, etc.
2. Write each word on its own post-it note.
3. Post the sticky notes together in a visible spot on a wall.
4. Provide participants with pens and their own blank post-it notes.
5. Show participants the “wall of words” and ask them to take a few minutes to look over the words and recall a work story associated with one of the words.
6. To demonstrate how the activity works and help the group warm up, start the storytelling session yourself by removing one of the words and posting it somewhere nearby on the “story wall” as you share a story associated with that word.
7. Now, ask a participant to select a word from the “wall of words,” post that word on the “story wall,” and share their story. As that person is talking, ask the others to jot down new words that come to mind based on that story.
8. When the story is finished, ask for a new volunteer to use one of their own words or select a word from the “wall of words” and post it to the “story wall” while sharing their story. Repeat this process to create a “story wall” which will act like an archive of the campfire conversation.
9. Before you “put out” the fire, ask the players if there are any lessons learned they want to add.

# INTERACTIVE TRIZ

TRIZ is an acronym that stands for a Russian phrase: "Teoriya Resheniya Izobretatelskikh Zadatch." In English, this translates into "Inventive Theory of Problem Solving." The basic idea behind a TRIZ is to put a critical lens on thinking about how to create a system or process that is designed to fail. An Interactive TRIZ is acting out all of the ways a system or process can possibly fail due to individual or team behaviours and communication.



30-45 minutes



Groups of 5-12 (can have multiple groups)



A safe space to act without disrupting others

Source: Adapted from *Liberating Structures*

## DEBRIEF (following the activity)

Debriefing (100% unwanted behaviors):

- Are we actually currently doing any of the unwanted things, even if only in a minor way or a small percentage of the time?
- Is there anything that we never EVER do?
- What actions can we commit to avoiding altogether?
- What can we commit to doing?

Debriefing (100% desired behaviors):

- Are there one or two ideas that emerged from this exercise that we can really focus on as a team?
- What will we do to avoid unwanted behaviour and role model desired actions and behaviours?
- What strategies and support can we use as a team to embed the desired actions in our day-to-day work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Divide participants into groups.
2. In each group, decide on a topic you would like to act out. Remember that your TRIZ is about how to get *unwanted* results. For example, a TRIZ question could be: How will we ensure a patient and/or their family members feel as unwelcome as possible coming into our unit?
3. Divide your group in two and decide which half will be actors, and which half will be observers.
4. Define which acting role each actor will have (e.g. patient, nurse, doctor, unit clerk, family member, etc.)
5. Before starting, reflect on some actions, behaviours, or traits that will ensure an unwanted result.
6. Act out all of the things each assigned role can do to achieve the unwanted result. Be creative! Be extreme! Make yourself laugh!
7. Debrief as a team (sample questions on back of card). Allow observers to provide feedback and provide an opportunity to suggest things that could ensure even more unwanted results.
8. Switch positions, and allow the observers to now become actors. However, this time the group will ensure 100% of the time that they get the desired result! They will paint a picture of the ideal, reliable, and safe system.
9. Again, debrief as a team (sample questions on back of card). Allow the observers to provide feedback and create the opportunity for them to suggest things, phrases, or behaviours that could ensure desired results are achieved more often.

# JUST LISTEN

This activity encourages participants to communicate how they think and feel about a subject. It is intended to strengthen team members' listening skills.



25-30 minutes



Minimum of 2



8 index cards per pair; each card lists 1 discussion topic

Source: Adapted from MindTools

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How did speakers feel about their partners' ability to listen with an open mind?
- Did their partners' body language communicate how they felt about what was being said?
- How did listeners feel about not being able to speak their own views on the topic? How well were they able to keep an open mind? How well did they listen?
- How well did the listening partner summarize the speakers' opinions? Did they get better as the exercise progressed?
- How can we use the lessons from this activity in our day-to-day work?

Listening is an incredibly important part of good communication; however, it is a skill that people often ignore in team activities. This exercise can show team members how to listen with an open mind.

## WHAT TO DO



1. In advance of the session, prepare enough index cards for each team of two to have its own set of eight cards. Each card will have a different discussion topic listed on it (e.g. the role of culture in health care, trust in our work, patient safety, etc.).
2. Ask everyone present to pair off.
3. Provide each pair with their own set of eight index cards.
4. One partner blindly chooses a card and then speaks for three minutes on how they think and feel about that topic. Their partner cannot speak during this time – their primary goal is to listen.
5. After three minutes, the listener has one minute to recap what their partner said. They cannot debate, agree, or disagree – only summarize.
6. Next, the roles switch and teams begin the process again.

# MAKE A TEAM WITH...

In this activity, team members must act quickly to form small teams based on instructions that you shout out. The aim is to strengthen communication and help teach participants to “think on their feet” when needing to make quick decisions.



15-20 minutes



Minimum of 10



None

Source: Adapted from Mindtools

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How did you communicate during this activity?
- What communication strategies worked well?
- What communication strategies did not work well?
- What communication strategies could we embed into our day-to-day environments to help make communication more effective?
- Were you surprised by what you had in common in the room?
- Were you surprised by differences in the room?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Explain to participants that they will have to form a team based on the instructions that you shout out. For example, some instructions could include getting into a team with people who have the same number of children as you, or getting into a team with people who are born in the same month as you.
2. As the facilitator, shout out the instructions for the team request. Encourage participants to work as quickly as possible.
3. Once a team is complete (i.e. all the people in the room with two children have come together), participants can shout out or sit down to signal that their team is finished.
4. Repeat the exercise as many times as you want.

# TELEPHONE

When we communicate with others, we cannot know if they have heard us as intended unless they tell us what they have heard. Communication strategies like closed-loop communication can ensure the message was transferred as intended. Telephone is an easy way to experience the differences between one-way (open-loop) and two-way (closed-loop) communication.



15-30 minutes



Groups of 5-10 (can have multiple groups)



2 pre-prepared messages (approximately 3 sentences long)

Source: Unknown

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

In both rounds you were receiving and conveying a message.

- What were the differences between Round 1 and Round 2?
- What was the difference in the accuracy of the message conveyed?
- Did you feel the flow of the message change depending on one-way versus two-way communication?
- Was there a clarifying question that was helpful?
- How can we embed closed-loop communication in our day-to-day work?

## WHAT TO DO



This is a familiar activity that requires virtually no set up and is easy to pull together quickly. Two rounds of telephone will be played with two different examples. In the first round, one-way communication will be used. The second round will involve closed-loop communication (two-way).

1. Once in groups, identify who the first message sender will be for both rounds. Provide that person with a pre-prepared message that is about three sentences in length.
2. In the first round, the message sender must whisper the message exactly as written to the person sitting next to them. They can only say it once (no repeating). The receiver listens to the message once and cannot ask questions or write anything down.
3. The receiver then becomes the new sender and conveys the statement quietly to the next receiver in line.
4. Continue through the entire group.
5. The last receiver will share the message they heard aloud with the group. The first sender then reads the original message aloud.
6. Debrief with the group (see debriefing questions back of card).
7. Now, repeat this activity a second time with a new message. This time, the message sender says the message once and the receiver listening to the message repeats what they heard back to the sender. They can also ask one clarifying question. The sender repeats the message or clarifies discrepancies. This can only happen once per pair.
8. The receiver becomes the new sender and conveys the statement to the next receiver with the new rules.
9. Continue through the entire group.
10. The last receiver will share the message they heard with the group. See how this compares to the original message written down by the initial sender.
11. Debrief with the group a second time .

# TENT POLE

This activity is a powerful exercise for learning how to work together and communicate to small and medium-sized groups.



25-30 minutes



Groups of 8-12 (can have multiple groups)



1 thin, lightweight tent pole per group

Source: Unknown

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was your initial reaction to this exercise?
- How did your group cope with the challenge?
- What skills did it take for your group to be successful?
- What would an outside observer say were the strengths and weaknesses of your group?
- What other situations can work like this?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Lay tent poles flat on the ground throughout the room – you'll need one tent pole for each group.
2. Divide participants into multiple groups of 8-12 (depending on the number of participants).
3. Have group members line up on either side of the tent pole, lift up the tent pole to shoulder height and balance it on their index fingers. Note: no pinching or grabbing of the pole is allowed.
4. The object of the activity is to lower the tent pole to the ground from shoulder height. Easy, right? Wait, there are a few additional steps:
  - a. The team must work together to lower the tent pole to the ground from the starting position of shoulder height.
  - b. If at any time a team member's finger loses contact with the pole, the team must go back to the start and begin again.
5. As the facilitator, if a group is struggling you can offer suggestions to the group to help them out. If a group is moving too quickly remind them if a team member's finger loses contact they must start over again.
6. Finish when at least one team has gotten their tent pole to the ground.

# TOSS ME SOME FEEDBACK

This activity brings a team together to explore the importance of giving and receiving feedback and support in order to achieve successful outcomes.



10-15 minutes



Groups of 4-7 (can have multiple groups)



- Balls, bean bags or similar tossing items
- Blindfolds
- Stopwatch/timer
- Masking tape
- Boxes (empty paper boxes are great)

*Source: Adapted from Team Building Toolkit*

## **DEBRIEF** *(following the activity)*

- Tossers: What was challenging for you in Round 1 when you were receiving no feedback? How did you overcome the lack of support? Team: During Round 1, how did it feel to simply watch?
- Tossers: What was challenging for you in Round 2 when you received minimal feedback? Team: Your experience during Round 2?
- Tossers & Team: How was Round 3 different? How did it feel to be able to provide feedback? How did it feel to receive it?
- In the workplace, do we sometimes simply watch, or do we offer to help each other and accept help from others?
- When we do offer and accept help, what makes this process effective? What would make it more effective?
- What kind of feedback is most effective for you and why?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Each team needs one blindfold, one ball or bean bag, and one box.
2. Tape a start line for each team on the floor.
3. Place a box at least ten feet away from each start line.
4. Each team needs to assign a tosser, a retriever, a scorekeeper, and an assistant.
5. The tosser is blindfolded, stands behind the start line, and will throw the ball.
6. The retriever picks up the ball and throws it back to the assistant.
7. The assistant gives the ball back to the tosser.
8. The scorekeeper adds up the successful tosses for each round.
9. The remaining team members observe and/or cheer as per round instructions (see below).
10. One point is scored for every ball the tosser gets into the box. Note: the ball can bounce out; as long as it bounces into the goal box first, it counts as a point.
11. Play each round (1 minute per round). The goal is for the tosser to score as many points as possible in that minute.

### Round 1:

1. No talking.
2. The tosser attempts to score as many points as possible with no input or coaching from their team.

### Round 2:

1. The team can coach their tosser by saying either "yeah" or "boo," but nothing else.
2. The tosser attempts to score as many points as possible with this limited feedback from their team.

### Round 3:

1. The team can coach their tosser by providing any helpful information.
2. The tosser attempts to score as many points as possible with extensive feedback from their team.

# TRADE

In this activity, team members trade pieces of playing cards to put together complete cards. This activity is useful for showing team members others' perspectives, building communication and negotiation skills, and helping individuals to develop empathy.



15-20 minutes



Minimum of 9



- Playing cards (enough for 4-6 cards per team), cut into 4 triangular pieces
- Envelopes
- Private room

*Source: Adapted from Mindtools*

## **DEBRIEF** *(following the activity)*

- Which negotiation strategies worked? Which didn't?
- What could you have done better?
- What other communication and teamwork skills could have made this activity more successful?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Cut each playing card in half diagonally, then in half diagonally again, so you have four triangular pieces for each card.
2. Mix all of the pieces together and put equal numbers of cards into as many envelopes as you have teams.
3. Divide people up into teams of three or four – you need at least three teams. Give each team an envelope of playing card pieces.
4. Each team has three minutes to sort its pieces, determine which ones it needs to make complete cards, and develop a bargaining strategy. This strategy can be anything you like, but you might want to consider the best approach to get the cards you need – think bartering!
5. After three minutes, allow the teams to start bartering for pieces. People can barter on their own or collectively with their team. Give the teams eight minutes to barter.
6. When the time is up, count each team's completed cards. Whichever team has the most complete cards wins the round.