



# ATTIC

## Activities for Transforming Teams & Igniting Change

*"You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." - Plato*



**BC PATIENT SAFETY  
& QUALITY COUNCIL**

Working Together. Accelerating Improvement.



## *About the BC Patient Safety & Quality Council*

We provide system-wide leadership to efforts designed to improve the quality of health care in British Columbia. Through collaborative partnerships with health authorities, patients and caregivers, and those working within the health care system, we promote and inform a provincially-coordinated, patient-centred approach to patient safety and quality. For more information on our work, visit [BCPSQC.ca](http://BCPSQC.ca).



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## *What were we thinking?*

This resource is intended to facilitate working with groups to accelerate improvement through interactive team-building activities. It is designed to develop communication skills, model adaptive systems, shift culture, and foster innovation, creativity, and thought diversity.

For each of the activities in this resource, we outline the purpose, category, instructions, time commitment/range, number of participants, resources required, and debriefing notes.

## *Let's give them something to talk about!*





### *The importance of debriefing*

Debriefing after each and every exercise is essential to realizing the full potential of these activities. The debrief may take just a few minutes, or it may become an extended discussion. You should absolutely make time for discussion of the activity afterwards and relate it to the more general purposes of your session. The debrief is where the learning nuggets can be found!

The goals, circumstances, and groups associated with each activity will vary so much that it is impossible to provide precise instructions for each one. We have offered general guidance, and encourage you to make them their own.

## Activities Matrix Overview

To assist with your use of the various activities, we have created a matrix designed to help you identify the most appropriate resources for what you are trying to achieve. The broad categories of the matrix are outlined below:

-  **Adaptive Systems (Purple):** An Adaptive System is a system composed of interdependent elements that together form an integrated whole. A change in a single element of the system can have a cascading effect on the larger system.
-  **Communication (Blue):** Communication is how we share information through verbal messages, the written word, or more subtle, non-verbal signals.
-  **Creativity/Innovation (Orange):** Creativity is the ability to think and act in ways that are new and novel. Innovation is thinking creatively to develop an idea which, when implemented, leads to a more effective device or process.
-  **Team Building (Green):** Team Building includes activities your team can employ to improve interpersonal relations and social interactions.

A primary category has been assigned to each activity and determines the card's colour. If more than one category applies to a card, this is indicated beside the category matrix icon.

### Legend

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Category Matrix          |  Number of Participants |
|  Duration of the Activity |  Required Tools         |

# Activities Matrix

	ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS	COMMUNICATION	CREATIVITY/ INNOVATION	TEAM BUILDING
And Not But				
Banned				
Blindfold				
Brain Writing				
Building Blocks				
Building Together				
Campfire				
Counting Together				
Debate & Dialogue				
Extreme Empathy				
Flame Throwing				
Fresh Perspectives				
Idea Jackpot				
Interactive Triz				
Just Listen				
Kill the Elephant				

	ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS	COMMUNICATION	CREATIVITY/ INNOVATION	TEAM BUILDING
Look Before You Leap				
Lots and Lots				
Make a Team With...				
Method 101				
MindShift				
One Word				
Point of View Madlib				
Point of View Want Ad				
Polarity Map				
Random Idea				
Reinforcer				
Ripple Effect				
SCAMPER				
Step Back				
Telephone				
Tent Pole				
Toss Me Some Feedback				
Trade				

# 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.

## WHAT TO DO



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.”



# BANNED

Sometimes turning your thinking on its head can be the best thing to do when trying to generate new ideas and solutions to old problems. The banned exercise gets you to create future scenarios based on imagining a world in which a product, service or experience no longer exists. It explores how people might adapt in this situation to generate new ideas and creative solutions.



30 minutes



Groups of 6-8



- Flipchart paper for storyboards
- Markers

*Source: Adapted from Media Lab Amsterdam;  
IDEO Method Cards*

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

- What did it feel like to imagine a world where a product, service or experience no longer existed?
- Were you surprised by the ideas that you were able to generate?
- How could you apply this learning/experience in your work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Decide on a scenario to investigate. For example, a world in which there is no treatment for pressure ulcers.
2. Determine time and scope for the scenario. For example, we begin when the patient enters the hospital pressure ulcer-free.
3. Identify stakeholders. For example, patients, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, care aids, physicians, etc.
4. Create a storyboard by drawing your scenario. How would you adapt in your new world in which there were no treatment options for pressure ulcers? For example, you may draw frequent turning of patients or any other wild and creative solutions. Try to generate as many adaptations as possible.
5. Analyze the scenario through discussion. Explore your adaptations and how they might be put into practice.
6. Summarize insights. Discuss your adaptations and people's reactions to them. Are any possible to test or implement?

# 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



Pairs



- 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 heading back across the room.

# BRAIN WRITING

This activity provides an alternative to traditional brainstorming for generating new ideas. It is a great activity for quiet groups or when you want to avoid "group think" in idea generation. Ideas are generated by asking people to write down their ideas rather than presenting them verbally.



30 minutes



Groups of 4-6



- Extra-large index cards
- Pens

Source: Adapted from Media Lab Amsterdam

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How was this different than traditional brainstorming, or brainstorming on post-it notes?
- What was the hardest part of the activity?
- What was the easiest part of the activity?
- Did seeing others' perspectives change the ideas you generated in subsequent rounds?
- Where can you apply this learning in your work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Organize attendees into groups.
2. Ask each group to define a problem that it will tackle through "brain writing."
3. Each participant should "write" three solutions in two minutes, recording their ideas on an index card.
4. After two minutes, participants will pass their card to the person to the left.
5. Have the next participant build on the existing ideas by writing their own new ideas underneath the original solutions. Allow three minutes for this part of the exercise.
6. The process should be repeated as many times as there are people around the table, allowing an additional minute each time - so four minutes for the next person, five for the one after that, etc.
7. Once complete, the group should review the ideas that were generated and discuss which ones they could pursue further.

# BUILDING BLOCKS

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



30-45 minutes



Groups of 4



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



Groups of 4-6,  
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: <http://marshmallowchallenge.com/>

## 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 resource 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



Groups of 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.

# COUNTING TOGETHER

Not all activities work better when you try very hard and push them along. Sometimes, it is better to go slow to go fast, and providing gentle attention to something can get a task done more quickly by allowing you to be more adaptive.



10 minutes



Groups of 10-20



None

Source: Adapted from *Eye Openers*

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

Often when situations are vague, people want to control things and set rules to structure how they happen. Sometimes, trying very hard to succeed puts pressure on the process and can actually be counter-productive. However, not setting rules can often result in a messy or unpredictable process. Even though you might get to 20 quickly when you set rules, doing so misses the point of this exercise. The key is learning to be comfortable with ambiguity and letting a process/solution emerge naturally on its own.

- How did it feel to let the process emerge organically?
- What happened when it didn't work?
- What happened when it worked?
- How can letting a process emerge on its own help in the work we do?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Get participants to stand in a circle.
2. Ask the group to collectively count from 1 to 20 out loud, with each member of the group saying only one number at a time. So, one person will start with "one" and someone else in the group will say "two".
3. It is important to note that participants cannot set a particular order in which they speak, and cannot communicate to plan the order in which they speak.
4. At any point in time, if two people speak at the same time, the group needs to start counting from "one" again.
5. Continue until you make it from 1 to 20 without any overlap of participants speaking at the same time. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute at least once.

# DEBATE AND DIALOGUE

When we have a difference in opinion, we can engage in debate or dialogue. In debate, we are working to persuade or advocate for our own point of view, trying to prove that our perspective is correct and that another's perspective is wrong. With dialogue, on the other hand, we are working to understand another's point of view and re-evaluate our own point of view in light of that dialogue. With a true dialogue, the process is collaborative as people work to achieve a shared understanding.



20 minutes



Pairs



Cards with opposite word pairs

Source: Adapted from the *Big Book of Conflict Resolution*

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- During the debate portion of the activity, how did you react to your mini-conflict?
- Is it difficult to listen when someone has a different point of view than you?
- Is this normally how you react in conflict situations? Why or why not?
- What happened when you switched from debate to dialogue?
- How did the dialogue portion of the activity feel?
- When someone disagrees with you, do you always stop to ask questions and understand their perspective?
- How could you prompt yourself to engage in dialogue versus debate moving forward?

## WHAT TO DO



1. In advance of the session, prepare enough word pair "opposite" cards for each team to have its own card. Each card will have 2 opposite words listed on it (e.g. cats versus dogs, early birds versus night owls, e-books versus print books, staycations versus travel, summer versus winter, toilet paper over the top of the roll versus toilet paper under the bottom of the roll, etc.).
2. Ask everyone to pair off.
3. Provide each pair with their own "opposite" card.
4. Invite each partner to choose one of the topics on the card.
5. For five minutes, team members are invited to debate each other as to why their respective topic is better.
6. Stop the debate. Share with participants that the intention of this process was to put the pairs into a mini-conflict by picking opposing views on their respective topics and debating why their perspective was better.
7. Discuss with the group the differences between debate and dialogue.
  - In debate, we are trying to "beat" another's perspective.
  - In dialogue, we are trying to "understand" another's perspective.
8. Now, repeat this activity with a new approach. Instead of debating the two topics, invite the pairs to engage in dialogue about their respective topics. In doing so, invite them to ask questions and take the time to truly listen to the answers. The goal of this round is to create the space for each person to have a chance to be heard and learn from each other in order to come to a shared understanding about each other's respective topic.
9. After five minutes, stop the dialogue.
10. Debrief with the group.



# EXTREME EMPATHY

What is empathy? IDEO defines it as “the ability to be aware of, understanding of, and sensitive to another person’s feelings and thoughts without having had the same experience.” Empathy experiences are critical because they help us move beyond our own biases and assumptions. While we can never truly understand another’s experience, by taking part in an empathy experience we can better understand another person’s perspective



30 minutes



Pairs



- Veterinarian wrap or tensor bandages
- Sunglasses coated in Vaseline
- Ear plugs

Source: Adapted from IDEO

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- For those of you who participated in the extreme empathy experience, what was it like for you?
  - Did you gain a different understanding from the experience?
- For those of you who observed the extreme empathy experience, what did you notice?
  - What were they doing?
  - How were they doing it?
  - Why were they doing it that way?
- How could you apply this type of activity in the work that you do?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Each pair of participants requires one of the items from the required tools per pair.
2. Just before a coffee or lunch break, organize people into pairs.
3. Invite pairs to choose one of the items from the empathy experience supplies to have one of the pair:
  - Use wrap or bandages to limit mobility,
  - Wear sunglasses to limit vision, or
  - Insert ear plugs to limit hearing.
4. Invite empathy experience participants to get a coffee or have a conversation with their limited mobility, vision or hearing.
5. Invite the partner to act as an observer to note what they see during their partner's experience, specifically considering:
  - What are they doing?
  - How are they doing it?
  - Why are they doing it that way? Take a guess!
6. After about 15 minutes, invite participants to remove their bandages, glasses or ear plugs.
7. Provide pairs with five minutes to discuss what they experienced and observed.
8. Debrief with the group.

# FLAME THROWING

Body language can be a huge indication of how a person is feeling, and facial expressions are often the conveyor of meaning. We can free ourselves from feelings of rejection and threat by eliminating eye contact. Removing eye contact allows us to stay present and absorb feedback more effectively.



30-60 minutes



Groups of 8-10



Paper on which to write feedback

Source: Adapted from THNK School for Creative Leadership

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

For those receiving feedback (idea pitchers):

- Was it difficult listening to feedback?
- Did it get easier over time?
- What elements did you hear that needed improvement?
- How did you improve/adjust for your next pitch?

For those giving feedback (flamethrowers)

- Was it difficult to provide feedback?
- What did you like about this method of providing feedback?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Arrange the room with 1-2 chairs for those pitching their idea(s) at the front of the room, facing a semicircle of 6-8 chairs.
2. Ask 1-2 participants to volunteer to pitch an idea to the group.
3. Ask 6-8 participants to volunteer to be flamethrowers.
4. All volunteer participants are invited to come up to the chairs at the front of the room.
5. The volunteers with the idea(s) take three minutes to make a pitch to the flamethrowers.
6. Flamethrowers should have a few minutes to ask clarifying questions of the idea pitchers.
7. After the pitch, those pitching the idea should turn their chair(s) around so they are facing away from the flamethrowers.
8. The flamethrowers provide feedback on the pitch and try to "burn down" or pick holes in the idea. Note: The idea pitchers are not allowed to respond to feedback during this time, they are only allowed to listen.
9. Once the flame throwing is over, the idea-pitching volunteers are given five minutes to refine their idea(s).
10. A new group of flamethrowers are chosen.
11. Idea-pitching volunteers present their refined idea(s), and repeat the questioning and flame throwing process a second time.

# FRESH PERSPECTIVES

The purpose of the Fresh Perspectives is to help you and your team challenge the status quo. It is designed to help investigate the necessity, validity, and uniqueness of the current solution or approach. It is a great technique to use at the idea-generation phase of your project – and can give you the impetus you need to discard your current solutions in favour of ones that challenge the old way of doing things.



30-60 minutes



Groups of 4-8



- Copies of blank process tables for all participants/groups
- Pens

Source: Adapted from the Innovator's Toolkit

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- Did this exercise challenge your assumptions?
- Did it assist in generating new ideas and directions?
- How could you apply this tool to your work in health care?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Share a scenario with participants. For example: Create a new method for health care identification.
2. Invite teams to select a focus. This can be an innovation, opportunity, product, service, system, process, or business model. For example: Health care identification that is easy to use, secure, and private.
3. Invite groups to document the current solution's inputs, outputs, customers, suppliers and any other associated processes. For example: Create an ID card that is easy to use but impossible to lose or have stolen.
4. Ask groups to add assumptions that they take for granted about the current solution. These can include factual data, physical characteristics, supporting ideas or philosophies and limitations. List this in the first column (example below).
5. Review all process steps, elements, and assumptions and determine if any can be eliminated. Is it necessary, or can it be eliminated without incurring any negative side effects? Indicate yes or no in the second column.
6. If the step, element or assumption is necessary, what function or feature does it provide? Record this in the third column.
7. Once the elimination and reasons steps are complete, groups should explore alternatives by challenging the uniqueness of the solution. Is it the only way to provide the needed feature/ functionality, or are there alternatives?
8. After the process outlined above is complete, make a list of the alternative ideas that you want to explore further.

Process Step, Element or Assumption	Eliminate	Reason	Alternatives
Care cards are 5.5 x 8.5 cm in size	No	Provincial standard	RFID chip in a key chain
Care cards are blue	Yes		
Cards must be carried on you to receive care	No	Identity verification	Retinal or fingerprint scan

# IDEA JACKPOT

Idea Jackpot immerses you in a creative thinking process. We know that some of the best ideas are the surprising and incongruous ones. For Idea Jackpot to work, you need to come up with as many ideas as you can, as quickly as possible.

This activity combines the user, a location, and a tool to help generate ideas. These elements are made into propositions that may be incredibly insightful.



30-90 minutes



Groups of 3-8



- 4 pads of differently coloured post-it notes
- Markers or pens

*Source: Adapted from THINK School for Creative Leadership; The Thing from the Future*

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

This is a great method for generating ideas within groups. Here are some questions you can use to debrief with your team:

- How did this process feel for you?
- Was it challenging?
- What made it challenging?
- What was it like to generate ideas with the three different categories?
- Did anyone discover any hidden opportunities?
- Did anyone hit the jackpot with an idea?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Working in groups of 3-8 people, think of an innovation topic for which you want to generate new ideas. For example, how might we make education more engaging for students?
2. Make a list of users, stakeholders, members, and employees who are involved in (or influenced by) your innovation topic, and write each of them on their own blue post-it note. For example: "teachers," "students," "parents," and "universities" would each get their own blue post-it note.
3. Repeat this process, except make a second list of spaces, areas, or rooms all the people from the first list will frequent. Write each of these on their own yellow post-it note. (These spaces, areas, and rooms should relate to the chosen innovation topic.) For example: "classrooms," "the internet," "coffee shops," and "libraries" would each get their own yellow post-it note.
4. Repeat this process once more, this time making a third list of objects, tools, and artifacts the people from the first list will use in relation to the innovation topic chosen. Write each one on its own green post-it note. For example: "chalkboards," "computers," "iPhones," and "USB sticks" would each get their own green post-it note.
5. Randomly select one post-it note from each colour group and build a proposition around the combination of user, space, and object. For example: "students," "coffee shops," and "iPhones."
6. Individually, have each player come up with as many ideas as they can in five minutes. Write each of the solution ideas on its own orange post-it note. Please note that the sky is the limit! Logic and realism are not required for this part of the process.
7. Bring the group back together and share your ideas with the rest of the team.
8. Play a second round, using a new combination of post-it notes.
9. Repeat and play as many rounds as you like.
10. Once the activity is over, have your team vote on the favourite idea generated from the activity. Then refine it further together as a group.



# 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



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?

## WHAT TO DO



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.

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.

# KILL THE ELEPHANT

There are many ways in which we interfere with someone's ability to think creatively. Doubt, fear, playing the devil's advocate, or being a "naysayer" can deflate a team's energy during idea brainstorming. The Kill the Elephant exercise is an opportunity to acknowledge all of the "elephants" in a room and bury negative thinking at the inception of a project's ideation process. This is an activity that would be conducted prior to a separate brainstorming session.



15-30 minutes



Groups of 4-8



- Flipchart paper
- Post-it notes
- Markers/pens
- Tombstone Image
- Dots for dot voting

Source: Adapted from Gamestorming

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What were the challenges that prevented teams from pushing ideas forward?
- What would happen if we removed these barriers for teams?
- How could you apply this exercise to work that you do?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Decide on an upcoming project you would like to focus on.
2. Prepare separate flipchart sheets for each of the questions below. Post them around the room prior to starting, along with one image of a tombstone.
3. Before entering any brainstorm, have members answer as many of the following questions as they can about the chosen project. Ask each person to write their answer to each question on individual post-it notes.
  - What do I dislike?
  - What will go wrong?
  - How will this end in disaster?
  - What are my fears?
  - What are my qualms?
  - What are the risks?
  - What are my concerns?
  - What makes me roll my eyes?
  - What am I sick of hearing?
4. Ask participants to post their answers under the appropriate questions around the room.
5. Ask the team to vote on their top three answers for each question by dot voting (provide each participant with three dots to vote)
6. Now, place the top three elephants on the tombstone image. This provides the team with an opportunity to voice unaddressed issues.

# LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

Need help focusing on a wide range of requirements for a project? Or, are you questioning biases or assumptions being made by you or your team? This activity is a structured approach that helps unpack risky assumptions. Your team will be given the ability to speak about their concerns openly, and discuss what action is needed going forward



30 -60 minutes



Any number



- Flip-chart paper
- Post-it notes

*Source: Adapted from Assumptions Mapping, David J Bland, Precoil*

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

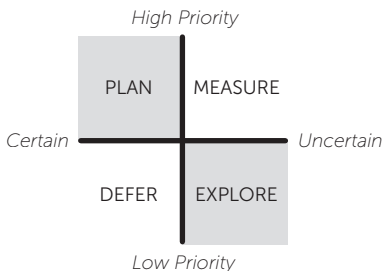
- How did this process help prioritize requirements for your project?
- What areas did you/your team decide needed further clarification?
- What do you think this tells us about our personal biases in projects?
- How will you be mindful of your biases in the future?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Make a list of assumptions by answering some of the questions below. Write them individually on a post-it (you can have more than one answer per question):
  - Who are we designing this solution for?
  - What is the problem we are trying to solve?
  - Why can't patients/providers solve this problem today?
  - What are the challenges getting a solution in place?
  - What are the internal hurdles?
  - How is leadership supporting this issue?
  - How are we uniquely positioned to solve this issue?
  - How are we measuring success?
  - How will the solution be sustained over time?

2. Create a 2X2 grid (like the one seen below) on a flipchart. Plot your answers/assumptions into the quadrant that you/your team feel represents it best. The level of priority (y-axis) is based on how important or urgent each assumption is. The level of certainty (x-axis) is based on how familiar you/your team know about the issue at hand.



3. Once your assumptions are plotted, consider the following action steps below:

**PLAN:** These assumptions are closest to fact. Start developing ideas and/or an action plan based on these assumptions.

**MEASURE:** Put measurement and evaluation methods in place to validate its level of importance.

**DEFER:** These assumptions can be either eliminated or deferred to another stage of the project.

**EXPLORE:** Research these assumptions further as there is very little known about them.



# LOTS AND LOTS

This exercise provides an opportunity to be agile and adaptive while communicating. The hand gestures presented by the partners force the story to take a different direction than it might have otherwise taken. Often, when we are leading change, outside forces may come along unexpectedly. Being able to adapt in these situations will contribute to our success with whatever we are working on.



5-10 minutes



Pairs



None

Source: Adapted from THINK School for Creative Leadership

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was difficult about this exercise? Did anyone stumble while telling their story?
- Who successfully told their story using the five senses?
- Who shifted their story according to the hand gesture delivered?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Ask participants to come up with hand gestures that signify the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). For example, pinching your nose may signify "smell."
2. Divide participants into pairs.
3. Assign one member of each team to be the storyteller and another to deliver hand gestures to influence the direction of the story.
4. Have the storyteller make up a story starting with "There once was a boy who was lost in the woods..."
5. While the story is being told, the other team member will help direct the story by giving the storyteller different hand gestures.
6. The storyteller must shift the description of the story according to the hand gestures being presented. For example, if their partner pinches their nose, they may say "but there was a strange smell in the woods."
7. As you work through the story, try to direct the story by using all the hand gestures.
8. After one round, ask participants to switch roles and play 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.

# METHOD 101

This is a simple brainstorming method designed to generate a very large number of ideas in a short period of time.



45 minutes



Groups of 5-10



- Flipchart paper
- Markers/pens

*Source: Adapted from Media Lab Amsterdam*

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

- How did it feel to generate so many ideas in such a short span of time?
- Were you more "free" with your ideas because of the time constraint?
- Did you generate any ideas that surprised you?
- How could you employ this technique where you work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Create groups of 5-10 people.
2. Have the group define a problem/issue the group will brainstorm on.
3. Identify a moderator in each group.
4. Invite the moderator to ask the group to generate 101 ideas in only 30 minutes while the moderator records the ideas on a flipchart.
5. Once the ideas are generated have the group review the results and see what they can act upon.

# MINDSHIFT

Shifting your mindset around unexpected events and suggestions can be powerful. You can see them as obstacles or you can see them as gifts. Seeing them as gifts can augment the opportunity for creativity and innovation.



15 minutes



Minimum of 2



None

Source: Adapted from *Eye Openers*

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

Ask participants a series of questions to get them to describe their experience with this activity:

- What was it like to complete this exercise?
- What made it confusing or difficult to do?
- What effect did the unexpected words have on your story?
- What was your initial mindset when the words started coming?
- Did your mindset stay the same or change throughout the activity?
- How does mindset affect your experience in this exercise?
- How does it feel when you think of the new word as a nuisance versus an opportunity?

If you see different ideas as obstacles, they will indeed become obstacles for you and feel like negative elements that you cannot control. Instead, differing ideas – or thought diversity – results in better ideas, better solutions, and increased innovation.

## WHAT TO DO



1. Assign people into pairs.
2. Describe the activity: Person A will tell a story and, after a few sentences, person B will start throwing in random words that A has to immediately incorporate into their story. For example:  
Person A: There once was a dog named Bob who liked to chase balls.  
Person B: Apple.  
Person A: One time, Bob accidentally thought an apple was a ball and then developed a taste for apples.
3. Before starting, demonstrate this process by asking someone to throw random words at you while you tell a story. Try to incorporate the words into the story as you tell it, to show them how the exercise works.
4. Have the pairs work on their stories as outlined above with Person B continuing to throw random words into Person A's story until the exercise is complete.



# ONE WORD

Change is possible, but attention is required! Rather than trying to “boil the ocean” and focus on too many changes at the same time, teams can keep things simple. By prioritizing clarity and sustained focus over time they can increase their chances of successful change.

The goal of this exercise is to choose one word to be your team’s focus, and to keep the team’s attention focused on their word and the change they want to achieve. Just one word to focus and inspire the team!



60 minutes



Minimum of 2



- A team
- 5mm coloured adhesive dots
- Flipchart paper
- Markers/pens
- Post-it notes

Source: Adapted from *One Word 365*; *My One Word*

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was it like to focus your team’s attention this way?
- How do you think it will work to have a single word to help sustain focus?
- How could you use this word in your day to day operations?
- How could you leverage it to help you?
- What are other ways could apply this activity in the work that you do?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Arrange the team with flipchart paper, markers/pens and dots for voting (four dots per team member).
2. Invite the team to discuss one of the things they want to achieve as a team.
3. After 15 minutes, ask the team to make a list of words that sums up their description of what they want to achieve. Do this by inviting each team member to write each word on individual post-it notes and placing these words on the shared flipchart paper.
4. After 15 minutes, identify a moderator to review the list of words with the group.
5. Have the team narrow down their list of words by inviting each team member to place a dot on their top three choices.
6. After voting, the moderator removes any words from the flipchart paper that did not receive a dot vote.
7. Invite the team to review the list of remaining words and discuss the choices in light of their goal discussed in step 2.
8. After 10 minutes, invite each team member to place a dot on their top word choice.
9. Again, after voting, the moderator removes any words from the flipchart paper that did not receive a vote.
10. Invite the team to review the list of remaining words and come to consensus on the word that will guide them. Note: this word should really resonate with the group and speak to each member.
11. Have the team commit to using the word to guide them, identifying how and when it will be used to help maintain their sustained focus.
12. Debrief with the team.

# POINT OF VIEW MADLIB

Point of View (POV) MadLib is a reframing activity that allows an individual or group to take a wicked problem and translate it into an actionable problem statement. If you haven't heard of them, madlibs are phrase template word games where one player prompts others for a list of words to substitute for blanks in a story. In this case, a madlib format provides a framework to develop the POV by creating a statement that defines three elements: a user, a need, and an insight into that user's POV.



10-15 minutes



Pairs



- Flipchart paper
- Markers/pens

Source: Adapted from Bootcamp Bootleg

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was it like to try to understand another's point of view?
- By defining the user's need and a surprising insight about them, did it help you to better understand and articulate the problem?
- How might you use this activity in your day-to-day work in health care?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Organize people into pairs.
2. Have each pair define a problem/issue for which they will create a madlib. In this case, it needs to be an issue about which the pair has some knowledge. For example, teenage girls require nutritious food to be healthy.
3. Have pairs complete the following madlib:       (user)       needs to       (user's need)       because       (surprising insight)      .
4. The *(user)* is the user of the solution, the *(user's need)* should be a verb and the *(surprising insight)* is not simply the reason for the need, but a stepping stone to create a solution.

For example, instead of "A teenage girl needs more nutritious food because vitamins are vital to good health" try "A teenage girl with a bleak outlook needs to feel more socially accepted when eating healthy food, because in her neighbourhood social risk is more dangerous than a health risk." Note how the later madlib is an actionable problem statement which gives the people who are developing solutions something to sink their teeth into to start solving the problem.

5. Invite the pairs to try out a number of options to create a madlib for their problem/issue.
6. Once everyone has an actionable problem statement, the statement can be used to start identifying solutions to the challenge.

# POINT OF VIEW WANT AD

Similar to a Point of View (POV) Madlib, a POV Want Ad reframes a design challenge and translates it into an actionable problem statement using a playful format. The POV Want Ad highlights a specific user and embeds the user, his or her need, and any insight about their POV into a want ad format.



10-15 minutes



Groups of 2-6



- Flipchart paper
- Markers/pens

Source: Adapted from Bootcamp Bootleg

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was it like to try to understand another's point of view?
- By defining the user's need and a surprising insight about them, did it help you to better understand and articulate the problem?
- How might you use a POV Want Ad in your day-to-day work in health care?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Create groups of 2-6 people.
2. Define a design challenge a particular point of view would have.
3. Have the groups write the descriptive characteristics of a user. For example, "a high energy teenager."
4. Follow the description with the word "seeks." For example, "a high energy teenager seeks..."
5. Complete the ad with the insights about the user's point of view. For example, "a high energy teenager seeks awesome social network for managing their type 1 diabetes. Interests should include issues of societal importance (e.g. how much parents suck and why being a vegetarian is a good thing). Willingness to IM constantly during the school year is a MUST."
6. Once groups have an actionable problem statement, the statement can be used to start identifying solutions to the challenge.

# POLARITY MAP

Polarities are two opposing positions. With polarities, there is no definitive endpoint or “one right answer,” so they need to be managed rather than solved. To do this, polarities require “and-both” thinking in which we leverage the strengths of each pole while mitigating the weaknesses or drawbacks of each. Polarity maps are valuable tools in helping to foster “and-both” thinking and manage polarities. Managing is getting the most of both polarities while failing is getting the worst of both.



60 minutes



Groups of 4-10



- Polarity topic cards (a selection of cards for each group)
- Flipchart paper
- Pens

Source: Adapted from NHS England

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was it like to explore the positive of both topics?
- What was it like to explore the negatives of both topics?
- Did this allow you to see the possibilities of each topic/polarity?
- What was the value of identifying the early warnings and actions for the negatives and positives of the poles?
- How would you apply this activity back in your workplace?

## WHAT TO DO



1. In advance, prepare polarity topic cards to use during the activity (e.g. detailed versus emergent planning, central control versus distributed leadership, tradition versus innovation, evolutionary versus revolutionary change, patient-centred care versus provider-centred care, etc.).
2. Using the index cards on the tables, invite groups to spend five minutes picking a polarity to discuss.
3. Once a topic is chosen, ask teams to create a polarity map by constructing a simple two-by-two matrix on their flipchart paper.

	<u>TOPIC 1</u>		<u>TOPIC 2</u>	
<i>Action Steps</i>	<i>Positives</i>		<i>Positives</i>	<i>Action Steps</i>
<i>Early Warnings</i>	<i>Negatives</i>		<i>Negatives</i>	<i>Early Warnings</i>

4. Have teams write one of the topics (aka polarity) above each column.
5. Invite teams to use the top row of their polarity map to record the positives of each topic.
6. After 10 minutes, invite the teams to use the bottom row to record the negatives of each topic.
7. After 10 minutes, have the teams identify early warnings and record them beside the negatives of each topic. Note: early warnings are those signs that will let them know when they are moving to the downside of one or both of the topics.
8. After 10 minutes, invite the teams to outline actions they can take to ensure that they are maintaining the positives of each topic. Have teams record these beside the positives in the top row.
9. After 10 minutes, invite the teams to discuss the results of their polarity map for five minutes.
10. Debrief with the teams.



# RANDOM IDEA

If you take random ideas that are very different from each other, the line the brain wants to draw between them is often the path you would never take, and is therefore a creative way to generate original ideas.



10 minutes



Groups of 6



- 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper
- Markers

Source: Adapted from THINK School for Creative Leadership

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

This is a great method for generating ideas within groups, either within or outside of health care. Here are some questions you can use to debrief with your team:

- What was it like to do this?
- How did it feel when your partners encouraged you?
- Were you more creative using this approach?
- Was it challenging to link three random words?
- How could you apply this activity back in your workplace?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Give all participants a marker and an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper.
2. Ask participants to write down, in big letters, three of their favourite things. Note: these favourite things can be food, activities, countries, co-workers, or something else. For example, a piece of paper might say: dogs, cell phones and cheese. Participants are only allowed one minute.
3. Tell participants to walk around the room with their sheet of paper held out in front of them so others can read what they have written. Allow approximately one minute for this.
4. Tell the group to stop walking and randomly form groups of three.
5. Have participants in each group read the paper of the person on their right and then circle one of the items on their list that they like best. The group will end up with three pieces of paper with one word circled on each piece of paper.
6. Using the words that the participants have circled, generate a new service or idea based on those words. For example, virtual cheese treats for my dog on my cell phone!
7. Now, as the groups are generating new ideas, they will pitch their ideas as cheesy sales people from an infomercial to each other. Note: Have participants talk in short sentences and build on each other's ideas. Encourage them to say "great idea" or "I looove your idea" before adding something new. Participants have three minutes for this part of the exercise.
8. As the facilitator, walk by quiet groups and encourage them to think out loud.

# REINFORCER

Feedback is important. Learning to provide it effectively is key for high functioning teams. This activity helps you consider the most effective ways to guide your teammates to their goals, and demonstrates the power of using positive and negative reinforcement.



10-15 minutes



Minimum of 6



Timer/stopwatch

Source: Unknown

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- Which method was the most effective in guiding the volunteer to the object?
- Which method was the least effective?
- What does this exercise tell us about the usefulness of different types of feedback we should be giving to our teammates?
- How could the learning from this exercise be applied to your work?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Send three volunteers outside of the room (they are not to hear what the activity is about at the start).
2. As the facilitator, instruct the remaining participants to choose one object in the room (e.g. someone's coffee mug).
3. Inform the participants that the objective is to help each volunteer locate this object.
4. Before bringing the first volunteer into the room, tell the participants that they may only help this volunteer by booing or jeering whenever they move AWAY from the object.
5. Bring the first volunteer into the room. Tell them there is an object in the room they need to find, and that the audience will be giving them clues on how to locate it.
6. Time how long it takes for the first volunteer to locate the object.
7. Before bringing the second volunteer into the room, tell the participants that they may only help this volunteer by cheering or applauding whenever they move TOWARD the object.
8. Bring the second volunteer into the room, and tell them there is an object in the room they need to find, and that the audience will be giving them clues on how to locate it.
9. Time how long it takes for the second volunteer to locate the object.
10. Before bringing the third volunteer into the room, tell the participants that they will combine both methods by jeering when the volunteer moves AWAY from the object and applauding when they move TOWARD the object.
11. Time how long this takes for the third volunteer to locate the object.

# RIPPLE EFFECT

This activity demonstrates how you can have a system-wide effect by touching only one element in a system. Sometimes, in isolation, it can be difficult to see that everything we touch has the potential to cause a ripple effect throughout our system. As you embark on your journey of change and transition, what are the implications for the system you work in?



10-15 minutes



Minimum of 30



Space large enough for the group to move around

*Source: Adapted from Eye Openers; Systems Thinking Playbook*

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

- What did you observe during this activity?
- Did anything surprise you?
- How does this relate to your work?

In his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*, Peter Senge offered this simple, yet profound axiom: "Small changes can produce big results – but the areas of highest leverage are often the least obvious." Here, he refers to what systems thinkers call "leverage points" – well-timed, well-placed actions that can produce significant, lasting improvements/changes. Most people immediately grasp the concept of leverage points, but to spot them in an actual system is often more difficult. This exercise quickly illustrates the concept of leverage points through concrete changes made to the group's structure when one person is moved.

## WHAT TO DO



1. Have participants stand up.
2. Have them look around the room and secretly select two people. Tell them not to reveal who they have picked!
3. Instruct participants that when you say "go" they should try to make an equidistant triangle with those two people. That means they should stand so there is an equal distance between them and each of the two people selected. For example, if I picked you and you, I would stand somewhere around here; if one of you moves, I also have to move with you to keep the equidistant triangle intact
4. Instruct participants that they are to stick to their original two people throughout this activity. They must keep the triangle intact. No talking. No touching! Okay, get into position.
5. Once they have had a few minutes to get into place, instruct participants that you are going to touch one of them on the shoulder and move them to a new location.
6. Instruct everyone that they must all try to maintain their equidistant triangles as this person is moved.
7. Repeat the exercise 2-3 times staying with the original two people.

# SCAMPER

Sometimes we need a little help to come up with fresh ideas. SCAMPER is an amazing tool that can be leveraged to help stretch your ideation process. It helps you stretch your thinking by directing your brainstorming.



30 -60 minutes



Any number



- Flip-chart paper
- Post-it notes
- Markers/pens

*Adapted from Scamper; Thinkertoys;  
MindTools*

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

- How did it feel to generate ideas this way?
- Did the mnemonic help to stretch your thinking? If so, how?
- What do you think of the ideas you generated?
- Did you generate any ideas that surprised you?
- How would you apply this activity back in your workplace?

## WHAT TO DO



1. Before starting the brainstorming process (as individuals or teams) introduce SCAMPER to participants. As an overview, SCAMPER is a mnemonic that aids lateral thinking by serving as a checklist to stretch brainstorming in different directions.

**Substitute:** Substitute things, places, procedures, ideas and even emotions.

**Combine:** Combine previously unrelated ideas, goods or services.

**Adapt:** Adapt an idea from one industry to another.

**Modify:** Modify by changing the shape, look or feel of a good or service.

**Put to other use:** Put the item to use in another setting or for another purpose.

**Eliminate:** Eliminate by considering what can be removed or streamlined.

**Reverse:** Reverse or reorganize the process by sequencing differently or trying the exact opposite approach.

2. Provide teams or individuals with flipchart paper, post-it notes, pens and markers.
3. Invite teams to identify a subject they will brainstorm on and write this subject at the top of their flip chart paper. For example, how can we use waiting rooms more effectively?
4. Write the SCAMPER mnemonic in columns just below the brainstorming subject.
5. Ask participants to brainstorm on their topic, working through each letter of the SCAMPER mnemonic to explore new solutions by substituting, combining, adapting, modifying, putting to other use, eliminating or reversing. When you think you are done one of the letters, linger a bit longer. Note: the goal is to go for quantity over quality when using this approach. You can filter your ideas after the fact!
6. After 30 minutes, invite the group to review their ideas and select some of the highlights.
7. Debrief with the group.



# STEP BACK

Often, in our work and in our lives, we don't have the opportunity to stop and truly reflect on what we are doing and what we could change. This exercise provides an opportunity to reflect on the shifts that can happen in adaptive systems, and the importance of pausing, taking a step back, and reflecting on what we are doing and how we could do it better.



15 minutes



Groups of 6-8



5-6 differently-sized balls per group

Source: Unknown

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

Often, in the work we do, we get into patterns of doing activities. In the whirlwind of everything that is going on, we often don't have the opportunity to pause, reflect on what we are doing, and question if it could be done differently. Established patterns may not work when workload increases.

- What did you notice?
- How often do you stop to be curious about what you are doing?
- How often do you take a "bird's-eye" or "balcony" view of your work?
- How could you apply the learning from this activity in your day-to-day work?

Adaptive systems are constantly changing, so this exercise serves to emphasize the importance of taking a "view from the balcony" – so we can take a high-level view of what is happening and identify opportunities for improvement.

## WHAT TO DO



1. Have participants stand in a closed circle. (Note: If the group is very large, it may be necessary to split people up into smaller groups.) Assign a facilitator for each group.
2. Facilitators start by throwing the ball to someone in the circle and saying their name as the ball is thrown.
3. Have participants continue catching and throwing the ball to establish a pattern for the group. (Each person must remember who they receive the ball from and who they have thrown it to.)
4. Once everyone has received the ball and a pattern is established, introduce more balls, so there are always several balls being thrown at the same time – still following the set pattern.
5. Continue this process until the throwing becomes impossible or someone stops the group to pause.

# 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



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



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



- 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.

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