Group process tools

# Enga**g**ement Tools

These tools help to actively and creatively engage partners in discussions, getting them out of habitual conversation patterns.

## Baseball Partners/Clock Partners

Distribute a representation of a baseball diamond (or clock). Ask participants to sign up 4 partners, one for each “base” (or clock numbers, 12, 3, 6, 9). Partners must be from other tables and each individual can only sign up once. People sit down when they have all 4 partners. Assign the task once the partners have self-selected.

## Brainwriting

Set up flipcharts in different corners of the room and assign small groups (no more than 5 groups) to work at each chart. Assign a topic or question to each group, and ask each to appoint a scribe/recorder. Give each group 1 minute to brainstorm as many ideas as they can about the topic. At the end of the minute, groups move to new charts. Give 1 minute again to record new ideas (add to what is on the chart). Switch as often as the number of groups in the room.

## Paired Reading

Participants are provided a short article or excerpt from a book to read aloud (no more than one page). First person (“A”) reads one paragraph, then second person (“B”) summarizes. Then they switch: B reads a paragraph, A summarizes. Each pair then shares out themes to the larger group.

***Modification:*** Divide longer readings among all the members of a table, assigning sections to each member. Individuals summarize what their section was about and the group then decides the key themes to share out to the larger group.

## Think-Pair-Share

People first respond in writing to a reflection question, then pair up with someone and share their responses.

# Inclusion Tools

These tools help to build trust and rapport within a partnership through building stronger relationships.

## Synectics

Pair up or form clusters. Select a recorder and generate responses to different metaphorical questions. Examples:

* Coalition building is like what sport or activity? Why?
* How is developing boundary spanning leadership skills like sailing a boat? Why?
* How is a culture of health like yogurt? Why?
* How is a team like an orchestra? Why?

## Kitchen Gadgets

Each person relates the role they play in their organization/partnership to a kitchen gadget. Each shares role, gadget and why they chose that gadget.

## License Plates

Each person completes a “license plate” on a 5 X 7 blank index card. The plate shows birth month and “renewal” date and a picture that describes something about them. Put all the license plates on a wall and group tries to guess who belongs to which plate.

## Paired Interviews

Pair up and interview each other with questions provided by the facilitator. Each person introduces the other to the group. Examples of questions/topics:

* Reasons for being at the meeting
* Relationship to the topic
* Feelings about being here
* Favorite food
* Pets, children
* Hobby

## Like Me

People circulate in the room and find others who are like themselves in specific ways. Examples:

* Similar role
* Like to get up before 6 a.m.
* Have more than one child
* Ate a full breakfast today
* Have a passion for chocolate

## Scavenger Hunt

Distribute a Scavenger Hunt sheet with different items and have people try to gather as many signatures as possible in a specific timeframe. Examples:

* Plays an instrument
* Has visited 5 countries
* Likes rainy days
* Has an unusual pet
* Has a nickname
* Speaks more than one language
* Has been on TV or the radio
* Saw a movie at a theatre last weekend
* Won a contest
* Can make a pie
* Hates games like these
* Enjoys mystery books
* Comes from a family with more than 4 kids
* Did not grow up in this state
* Has an unusual hobby

***Variation:*** People Bingo. Distribute a Bingo Sheet with each squre naming something about people situations. Have peole mingle and find a person who matches the square description. Write the person’s name in that square. Keep playing until there are several winners.

## KRES Check

Each person shares what they bring to the team in terms of Knowledge, Resources, Skills, Experience. Meeting recorder documents these in a “team inventory” which is used as a resource as the team works on its tasks.

## Hopes, Fears, Concerns

Participants brainstorm on sticky notes one Hope, one Fear, one Concern about the work ahead (make it specific to the team’s context). Share round robin and then discuss how to reduce the fears/concerns.

## Check In

Round robin each person “checks in” to tell the group how they are feeling at the start of the meeting or workshop. Examples:

* If I were a weather forecast today it would be…
* Bags I’m leaving at the door include…
* On a scale of 1-5 my energy right now is a …

# Reflection Tools

These tools help partnerships build reflection and continuous improvement into their work and learning.

## Ah Ha! Oh No!

This is a good processing tool after a jigsaw reading, simulation, case study, webinar, etc. Facilitator draws a “T” chart on a flipchart and people post their Ah Ha’s and Oh NO’s in each column. An *Ah Ha!* is a positive insight (something affirming or confirming) and an *Oh No!* is a concern or challenge.

## Cotter Question

Based on a technique developed by Maury Cotter at University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Office of Quality Improvement, participants are asked to imagine the worst: What could go wrong in this meeting or workshop? What could we do to ensure it is a disaster? Then they talk about what they could do to prevent that from happening. This is a good way to generate ground rules or norms for a group.

## Check Outs

Each member briefly shares how they’re feeling at the end of the meeting or workshop. Examples:

* If I were a movie (song, book), its title would be…
* On a scale of 1-5, my energy right now is a …
* A strategy or tool I’m taking away with me today is…
* A “feather” [insight, A Ha moment] I got today is…
* 5 words (or 1 word if you have less time) to describe today are…

***Variation:*** Have small groups come up with one check out as a team.

## Cube Review

Prepare 4 or 6 sided paper cubes with questions or topics on each face. Ask groups to roll the die and discuss the question or topic.

## Devil’s Advocate

A particularly useful technique for helping groups avoid “Group Think.” Someone is designated the honorary “devil’s advocate” whose job it is to challenge the thinking of the group.

## 4 Corners

Use as a physical energizer to “check in” with each other, or to help participants reflect on how their group is functioning. Post visual metaphors or questions or topics in the 4 corners of the room. Ask participants to go to corner of their own choice and discuss why they chose that corner with the people they find there. Examples:

* I am feeling like (a sparkly diamond, a swiftly flowing brook, trees blowing in the wind, a canyon)
* My group is in the (forming, storming, norming, performing) stage
* Our group approaches its work like (race cars, walking, sailboat, trolley car)

***Modification:*** Use this activity to invite people to debrief after learning about something (e.g,. a strategy, process, tool, resource). Post 4 different pictures of food in each corner and ask people to go to the corner of their choice. Examples:

* Chocolate – Wow! That was a new process.
* Carmel – older than dirt, but tried and true.
* Nuts – old process but used in a new way.
* Marshmallow – challenging process.

## Gallery Walk

Small groups prepare a flipchart to show what they’ve learned during the day. Provide enough time for the groups to put plenty of detailed images into their charts. At a designated time, participants walk around the room visiting each group’s work. Examples:

* Our “burning” questions at the beginning of the day…
* Circling in our minds…
* Squaring with our beliefs…
* 3 points to remember…
* Windowpane (divide chart into 6 squares and draw 6 different things remembered from the day)

***Modification:*** Groups ask one person to stay behind and explain their work to the other groups as they go visit others’ work. They then return and share what they learned with the “home person.” If the gallery walk is “on their own” (no “home person”), ask participants to leave a sticky note with a “kudo” (great idea) or question at each group’s flipchart.

## GLP (Grateful-Learning-Promise)

As an end of day reflection, ask individuals to reflect on 1 thing they are grateful about the group, 1 thing they’re learning, and/or 1 thing they promise to do as a result of the learning.

## Keep-Stop-Start

Participants generate one thing they team, the presenter, the organization, or themselves should keep doing, one thing they should stop doing, one thing they should start doing. This is a good activity to use when reviewing and renewing mission, vision, values.

## Mailbox

Have participants write on an index card a question they have about the topic at hand. They then put the card into an envelope and decorate the envelope with symbols and pictures so that they can find the envelope again. Collect all the envelopes and later redistribute them to the group so that no one gets their own envelope. Have participants read the question they get, respond in writing, and then place the card back in the envelope. Repeat this for 2-3 cards/envelopes. At the end of the day each member gets their own envelope back with advice from different members of the group.

## Pop Up Survey

Use when energy is flagging or you want participants to review information for understanding. Participants sit in a circle of 4-5 people with no table in between. Each member leaves the group to interview others in the room regarding specific topics or questions posed by the facilitator. Examples:

* What I like about our work…
* What I wish we would do more of…
* What I wish we would do less of…
* What I’d like to do differently…
* What we seem to be good at…
* Examples of how we’re using our core values or team norms are…

Restrict to no more than 5 questions.

## Round the Room and Back Again

Individuals record one idea they got from the meeting or workshop. They then leave their paper behind as they circulate the group to gather as many different ideas as possible. At a designated time they then return to their paper and record as many ideas as they can remember. (Most adults can remembers from 5-9 items at one time.)

## Shapes

Individuals reflect on their learning using shapes. Examples:

* What’s circling around in your mind [circle]
* What’s squaring with (lining up with) your beliefs [square]
* What are 3 points worth remembering? [triangle]
* What new ideas might s-t-r-e-t-c-h you or your colleagues? [rectangle]

## They Melt in Your Mouth But…

Prepare small cups filled with M&M’s, one for each participant. Provide each participant with a list of questions to discuss, each question “keyed” to a color of an M&M. Tell people you want them to pick a color, then go find one other person in the room who selected that same color, and as you both eat your M&M’s, discuss the question that goes with the color. Switch every 2-3 minutes. This is a good activity for getting acquainted, as well as reviewing information.

## 3-2-1

Individuals record 3 ideas they want to remember from the meeting or workshop, 2 questions they have about the task, and 1 insight (or action) relative to the work.

## What, So What, Now What?

Individuals reflect on

* **WHAT?** What they learned
* **SO WHAT?** What the implications are for their team, organization, role, etc., and
* **NOW WHAT?** What they will commit to doing for a next step.

Can be used as part of action planning.