

Activity: The Dot Activity



TIME ESTIMATE
20-30 minutes



MATERIALS

Multi-coloured sticker dots, timer, chairs and open space/room (it is necessary for participants be in a space where they can't see their own reflections), whiteboard or powerpoint presentation for debrief questions

PURPOSE

To foster awareness of power dynamics and their influence on the ways we interact with other individuals, and encourage reflexivity around our roles as leaders and participants and how we perpetuate or resist group dynamics.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants will each have a sticker of a specific colour placed on their face while their eyes are closed. Once they open their eyes, they will be asked to sort themselves without speaking to one another or being able to know what colour dot they have on their face. Once they have sorted themselves, the group will discuss the power dynamics at play during the activity.

STEPS

- 1 Have a group of participants (6 or more people) sitting in a circle.
- 2 Ask participants to close their eyes as you will place a colour sticker dot on their cheek. Let participants know you will be tapping them on the shoulder gently as it can be jarring to have the dot placed while their eyes are closed. Remind participants to keep their eyes close until you give instructions to open them.
 - If participants prefer to place the dot themselves, please keep their eyes closed and leave their index finger out so that they can place the dot on their cheek themselves.
 - Please only place dots on cheeks and not elsewhere as that would be culturally insensitive.
 - Remind participants to keep their eyes closed until you have shared that everyone has a dot.
- 3 Place one dot on each participant. Be sure to:
 - Randomly select colours for each participants making sure colours are mixed.
 - Randomly alternate the side of the cheek for each participant.
 - Select 1 or 2 people (1 for smaller group size (5-10), 2 or more people for a larger group (10+)) to have a variation such as two dots on one cheek or one dot on each cheek of varying colours.
- 4 Instruct participants to open their eyes. Tell the group: "Sort yourselves out." and announce the following rules:
 - There will be no verbal communication from this point of the activity.
 - Participants are allowed to get out of their seats and move around in the space.
 - Participants have approximately 5-10 minutes to arrange themselves.

Facilitator Note

- It is important to this activity that "sort yourselves out" are the only instructions and not how they can sort and what to base sorting themselves on.
- The term "sort" may not be accessible for folks so finding synonyms may be helpful.

MODULE 1: FOOD JUSTICE PRIMER

- 5 Allow participants approximately 5-10 minutes to arrange themselves. When participants seem to be done, instruct them to (1) “raise your hands if you’ve sorted yourselves out” and (2) “raise your hands if you need more time”. Continue asking them to sort themselves out until everyone agrees or until you run out of time (whichever one comes first). Ideally, you would go through a couple rounds of “sorting”.
- 6 Once participants are sorted into their groups you can ask them to stay in their positions and begin debriefing the activity. If individuals are more comfortable you can let them return to their seats or sit on the ground.

Discussion Questions

1. What happened?
 - What did you sort yourselves based on?
 - Were there other ways you could have sorted yourselves?
2. Based or not based on dots
 - Why weren’t other ways of sorting explored?
 - How did you sort yourselves out?
 - What were the forms of communication?
 - Who were actively moving people?
 - Was everyone on the same page/understanding?
3. What were the dynamics in the room?
 - What were the rules?
 - Participants? Facilitator(s)?
4. Introduce the different definitions of power either on a powerpoint presentation or by writing on a whiteboard relating it back to the game:
 - Personal power: Refers to power within each individual to take action, make decisions and participate.
 - Ask the group: “In what ways did you have personal power in this game?”. Answers may include being able to choose where they stood.
 - Positional power: Refers to power that comes from hierarchies, such as age, experience, titles (ie. PhD., middle-aged person, celebrities).
 - Ask the group: “Who held positional power within the game?”. Answers may include individuals who took on more power by directing others (becoming “leaders” within the game’s context).
 - Systemic power: Refers to power built into socioeconomic relationships. The systems that hold power in our society include: government, business, education, media, family, health, faith groups, etc.
 - Ask the group: “What represented systemic power within the game?”. In the case of this game, it was the rules of the game itself as well as the facilitator.

This debrief should provide insight on how all three interact with each other and inform how individuals play the game. Often participants will make assumptions that the instructions were to sort based on the colour of the dots. This activity will have some participants take an active role in moving and categorizing themselves and others as “sorting”. This process will show how we play “within” or “outside” rules, who regulates them, group processes and dynamics.

ASSESSMENT

Write a ~3 paragraph reflection on the experience, using the “What? So What? Now What?” Model, reflective model was researched and [developed by Rolfe et al. in 2001](#) and has also been attributed to Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless, the creators of [Liberating Structures](#).

[This post](#) by Gustavo Razzetti, of the Liberationist, provides a good overview of the reflection format:

- What: Understanding the event
- So What: Make sense of the facts and their implications
- Now What: Identify course of action or new solutions based on the reflection

These reflections can be picked up at the end of the class as an ‘exit ticket’, where learners submit their short reflection before leaving the class or workshop.

NOTES: