

GET YOUR SHOVEL FACE ON

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OBJECTIVE

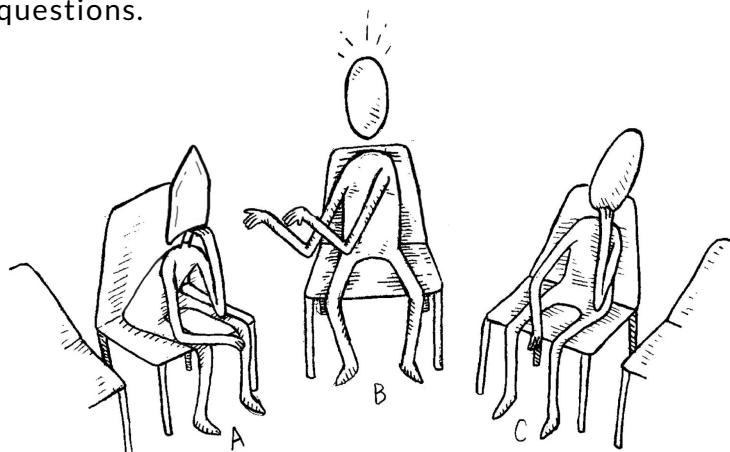
Students practice active listening, asking open-ended follow-up questions, and using reflective statements when someone has just shared something that is deeply personal.

MATERIALS

None.

INSTRUCTIONS

Students sit in one large circle. Person A asks a “primary” thought-provoking question of Person B, seated to their right. Person B will answer the question in 1–3 sentences (remind participants that the focus of the game is not on storytelling, but Person B does need to provide enough information to allow Person A to ask a relevant follow-up question). Person A responds by asking one open-ended, follow-up question. Person B answers that question. Person A listens, and then asks one more open-ended, follow-up question to probe deeper into the experience of Person B. After Person B responds to the second question, that pair is complete. Person A says “thank you” to Person B, and the game progresses to Person C, who is seated to the right of Person B. Person C will share their brief response to the same primary question asked of Person B. They will repeat the same exchange, with Person B asking two follow-up questions of Person C, thanking them to conclude their conversation, and then the game moves on to Person D’s response to the primary question and exchange with Person C. Go all the way around the circle so that eventually every person has answered the same primary question, and every person has listened and asked two follow-up questions.



You may increase the difficulty of the game by adding rules as the game progresses, such as:

- The question must be open-ended and affective (related to emotions, attitudes, or mood).
- Before asking a follow-up question, you must make a reflective statement (acknowledging the content, emotion, and/or meaning of what the speaker shared).

Remind students that it is acceptable to pause and allow for silence before asking a question. While it may be a new or uncomfortable practice, a silent pause can be very powerful. Tell students in advance that you may need to interject during the game to help them rework a closed question.

Example:

Primary Question: “What is the most significant learning experience of your life and what did you learn?”

Person B: “The most significant learning experience of my life was when my daughter was born. I learned how deeply I can love and that I’m a lot stronger than I thought I was.”

Person A: “What was it about the experience that showed you how strong you are?”

Person B: “She was born at home, and I felt proud that my body and mind could find a place of peace and fearlessness through an unmedicated birth. I felt like, through the experience, I tapped into a part of myself that I didn’t know was there before.”

Person A: “How has it impacted your life to be in touch with this new part of yourself?”

Person B: “It made me feel more ready to be a mother, knowing that strength was there. Now I can connect with that part of myself when I need to feel strong.”

Person A: "Thank you for sharing."

Person C: "The most significant learning experience of my life was when my sister got sick. It felt like I had to become an adult overnight, but it taught me how important family is."

Person B: (Asks open-ended follow up question.)

DEBRIEF

When the activity is complete, invite everyone to stand up, take some deep breaths, and move their bodies. Gentle shaking is an effective way to clear a heavy or stressful experience. After providing space for self-care, ask: How was that for you? What did you do that helped you form questions that elicited more information from the speaker? What helps you stay present when facilitating an intense moment?

LESSON

As a restorative justice facilitator, you will often surface stories and information from participants' lives that reveal something deeply personal that may provoke a strong emotional response in you. It is difficult to predict when this will happen, what will be shared, and how it will affect you and others present. Practicing being present and responding in the brave space of a game gives you the opportunity to learn about your own reactions and practice self-regulating to remain effective as an impartial facilitator.