

TOOL KIT





THE FISH BOWL DIALOGUE

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PURPOSE

GOAL

Fish Bowl is a dialogue technique used to foster dynamic participation in a group. As a useful alternative to traditional debates, it helps to deepen controversial topics, avoiding general polarization among point views, facilitating the emergence of personal experiences and emotional needs among participants.

DESCRIPTION

INSTRUCTION

1. SETTING (5')

In order to prepare the fishbowl activity you'll need:

- A few chairs in an inner circle, surrounded by larger circle(s) of chairs
- Try to enable easy access to inner and outer circle
- Flip charts to write key issues can be helpful
- An interesting question about the topic

INSTRUCTION

- 2. FACILITATING THE DIALOGUE (40')
- In the inner circle, or fishbowl, participants have a discussion; participants in the outer circle listen to the discussion
- To start the exercise the facilitators show the theme and express a first main question on the them (eh. ¿How do we relate with bullying?) then can ask for volunteers who would like to take sit on the chairs in the inner circle and talk . It is important to stress that just these participants have right to discuss the situations. If anyone else would like to express opinion he/she needs to replace person in middle bytouchinghis/hershoulders.

Participants can start with the discussion with goal to share their point of view, experiences as their possible solutions. Others are encouraged to take part in the discussion by replacing with goal to gather also other points of view. When the discussion is finished the debriefing is taking place and after other situation can be discussed.

INSTRUCTION

3. DEBRIEFING (15')

- During the debriefing, review key points, interesting comments and the group's feelings regarding particular issues. Participants must be allowed to develop their own conclusions and express themselves freely.
- Providing the participants with an overview document of the lessons learned and a list of key resources can be helpful after the exercise has ended.

Here are some interesting questions you can use as a starting point

To the observers (if any):

Was it difficult to not respond to the fishbowl speakers' comments? Why or why not? If so, what kinds of comments did you want to respond to?

Did you hear anything from the fishbowl that surprised you?

What helped you understand the information that was being shared (non-verbal indicators, contexts clues, etc.)?

INSTRUCTION

To the speakers:

How did it feel to share your feelings knowing that your peers were listening closely?

Do you usually have opportunities to share your perspectives on this theme?

What do you wish you could have said more clearly/what point do you wish you could have made?

EXAMPLE



Classic Fish Bowl

Set a topic and invite speakers in the inner circle to start the dialogue.

Observers can enter in the circle sitting in free chairs or touching the shoulder of inner participants in to replace them

Process Oriented Fish Bowl

You can use this version when you want to help the group to deepen in their personal experience on the topic.

In the setting you'll use only 4 Chairs for the inner circle:

2 Chairs will express the two main polarized points of view about the topic (eg. "For" and "Against" positions) (Chair 1 and 3)



2 Chairs will express positive and negative personal experiences related to the topic (Chair 2 and 4)

Theatrical Fish Bowl

Depending on the topic, you can previously highlight the main roles/characters that configure the theme. For example, working on the theme of bullying with your classroom you can bring the characters of the bully, the victim and the bystander. Once defined, you'll set as many chairs in the inner circle as characters highlighted. Label them with a paper, in order to fix a character in every chair.

PROS



Fishbowl is very helpful to explore the ideas of membership, identity, belonging and shared experiences. The structure lends itself well to discussions of complex topics and to challenging topics of cross-cultural significance. By providing all students both a speaking and listening role and a stake in the discussion, fishbowl can help build an inclusive and supportive learning environment. The observation aspect of the activity allows students to identify appropriate ways to participate in discussions. If used on a consistent basis, fishbowl discussions can establish boundaries and norms critical to anti-bias communication

CONS



In order to have a proper dialogue, this technique is less useful when groups are smaller than 12 participants.

TIPS



As a facilitator you can use two important tools in order to foster the group's experience:

- Metacommunication

It's important, in order to bring more awareness to the group, to communicate every experience happening during the dialogue, beyond the contents, as that's part of the group process. Pay attention to non-verbal communication in the inner and outer circles, changes in the atmosphere of the classroom and bring them to the dialogue as simple observation.



- Internal Experience

As a part of the field, the facilitator is connected to the experience of the group. Every feeling and sensations occurred to her are, in part, occurring in the group. Taking in this kind of information to the group, during the dialogue, will help other participants to bring awareness on their own perceptions and using this information to cross the edge to speak about their experience.

SOURCE

RESOURCE

- <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/fish-bowl-of-conflict.1362/>
-
- <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/learning/fishbowls.html>
-
- <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/community-inquiry/fishbowl>

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