

Exploring Leadership

PROBLEM SOLVING: BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a relaxed, informal approach to problem solving that encourages people to come up with solutions that can, at first, seem a bit crazy. Sharing such ideas can help you solve problems more effectively.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- Discuss old proverb: "There's more than one way to skin a cat"
- When was the last time you had to find a new way to solve a problem? How many solutions did you come up with?

Brainstorming is sharing ideas, no matter how crazy they may seem, in order to find solutions to problems. When you brainstorm with others, you don't judge anyone's ideas because you want ALL the ideas on the table, so everyone has to be comfortable sharing even the most crazy thoughts. The best solutions often arise from ideas that seemed crazy at first.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand and Practice Brainstorming "outside the box" ideas.
- Determine situations when Brainstorming is appropriate.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A few random household items
- Blank paper

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES:

Activity #1: Give each participant a sheet of paper and display a random object.

- Brainstorm all of the possible uses for this item. Don't limit yourself to just its intended uses: what else could it be used for? For example, you can use a fork to eat food, comb your hair, open cans, mix ingredients, clean pans, stab your enemy, etc. Write down creative ideas on paper.
- After a few minutes, share all ideas, looking specifically for the ones no one else thought of.

Activity #2: Shiritori is a game in which players have to think of a word beginning with the final letter of the previous word to create a long word chain. The first player who can't think of any more connecting words loses.

- Put students into teams and assign each team a first letter to begin their first word.
- Alternating players, teams write words on the board following the shiritori pattern. [Example for D Team: donkey - yacht - trip - parent - tea - apple - elephants...]
- When time is up, count the number of words each team has written to declare a winner.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Encourage participants to be creative and "think outside the box".
- During brainstorming, people should avoid criticizing or praising ideas. Judgment at this stage stunts idea generation and limits creativity.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Talk about what happened during each activity. You may pause in between the activities to reflect on the first, or reflect on both activities at the end.
 - What was hard about this activity?
 - How did Brainstorming help you?
 - What did you learn about Brainstorming?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Have a group discussion about when Brainstorming is important.
 - Where will you use this skill?
 - How can you practice Brainstorming?
 - Why is it important to share all your ideas no matter how crazy?
 - What jobs require Brainstorming?



CONCLUSION:

You will encounter a lot of problems that need solutions in your life, and if you can call on your friends and co-workers to help you brainstorm to solve them, you're going to be a lot happier and more successful. Brainstorming is useful in all kinds of situations. The trick is to remember not to make judgements while you come up with ideas - just let them come. Then you have more possibilities to choose from and you haven't limited your options. Practice using Brainstorming to strengthen your problem solving skills!

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REFERENCES

- <https://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html>
- <https://allesl.com/brainstorming-activities/>