

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming encourages open thinking and collaboration, helping to generate creative solutions. This lesson explores how all ideas—even bad ones—can lead to great solutions.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Understand the value of brainstorming.
- Develop creative problem-solving skills.

CONVERSATION STARTER: Is it better for everyone to think the same way, or is it good to have different perspectives?



PART 1 - WORD ASSOCIATION GAME

- Divide the group into two even lines.
- The facilitator starts by saying a random word (e.g., tree).
- The first person in each line says the first word that comes to mind related to the previous word (e.g., leaves).
- Continue down the line, with each person adding a new word.
- The goal is to see how quickly each group can complete their list.
- Compare how the word associations varied between the two lines.

FACILITATION TIP

Model vulnerability by sharing your own "bad" or silly idea first. When participants see that even the facilitator is willing to throw out imperfect ideas, it helps create a safe and open brainstorming space.

REFLECTION: Did the first and last word seem associated with each other? Why or why not?

PART 2 - MIND READING GAME



- Divide participants into pairs.
- On the count of three, both partners say a random word at the same time (e.g., flower and sky).
- Each pair must then think of a word that connects both words (e.g., petals or clouds).
- Count to three again, and both partners say their new word at the same time.
- Keep going until both partners say the same word at the same time.
- See which pairs matched their words the fastest.

REFLECTION: Were you able to read your partners mind? Why or why not?

FACILITATION TIP

Dive Deeper - How does fear of failure stop people from thinking creatively? What would happen if we saw mistakes as part of the brainstorming process instead of something to avoid?

PART 3 - BAD BRAINSTORM CHALLENGE

- Split participants into small groups (4–6 people).
- Each group brainstorms the most ridiculous or impractical ideas to solve a simple problem.
 - Example: "Create the perfect sandwich."
 - Example bad idea: Blend all the ingredients together into a smoothie.
- After brainstorming, each group transforms their bad ideas into practical solutions.
- Share the most creative or unexpected ideas with the group.

FACILITATION TIP

Encourage bold and unexpected ideas—sometimes, the most "ridiculous" ideas lead to the most creative solutions!

REFLECTION: How did coming up with silly or unrealistic solutions help spark creativity?

- Did sharing ideas—both good and bad—lead to unexpected solutions?
- Many great ideas come from mistakes or unconventional thinking. Why is it important to create a space where everyone feels safe sharing their ideas?

Problem: pickle jar lid got stuck

Solution: Launch it into orbit and have astronauts try to open it in zero gravity

Problem: waking up on time

Solution: Hire a mariachi band to serenade you every morning

Problem: cutting onions makes me cry

Solution: wear a full scuba mask and oxygen tank

Problem: dinner takes too long to cook

Solution: use a flamethrower to cook everything in under three seconds

APPLICATIONS

- Why is it important to have different perspectives when brainstorming?
- How does an open brainstorming space lead to better problem-solving and innovation?

KEY TAKEAWAY: Generating and sharing ideas, even imperfect ones, leads to stronger solutions. Different perspectives and creative thinking help problem-solving and innovation thrive.

CHECK UNDERSTANDING

Did the discussion and reflection questions help youth see how brainstorming—even with bad ideas or weird connections—can lead to valuable solutions?

