

Stage a Conflict Exercise



Teaching Note

Materials Needed:

- Two to three facilitators or a facilitator and one participant
- A pre-determined script or plan

Exercise Overview:

This exercise is designed as an introduction to conflict. The leaders or facilitators of the exercise engage in a pre-determined conflict so people can feel their reaction to what is happening around them. People have many feelings about conflict and yet they often deny them or are unsure of how to handle them.

Purpose of the Exercise:

The purpose of this exercise is to elicit a visceral reaction from the participants toward a simulated conflict. This simulation is done in front of the participants without their knowledge. In conducting the exercise in this way the participants are caught off guard and react the way they normally would. Afterwards they are made aware of what transpired and are asked to examine their reactions and why they respond to conflict in such a manner.

Note: This exercise should be done early in any training, workshop, or course.

Exercise Time required:

2 minutes to run

8 minutes to debrief

Total time:

10 minutes

Detailed instructions for running the exercise:

The facilitators or leaders (or a facilitator and participant) of the workshop or training should get together as part of their planning for the workshop and devise a conflict they would stage in front of the participants. The type of conflict does not matter, but the conflict should be dramatic and emotional in order to elicit a reaction from the participants.

General Debrief:

The debriefing should be centered on the reaction of the participants to the staged conflict. Here are some questions to guide the debrief:

- Now that you know this conflict was not real, but staged, let's discuss this for a moment. What was the purpose of this exercise?
- How did the situation make you feel? Why? What physical clues told you some feelings were happening?
- What was going through your mind? Why?
- Do you always have these reactions to conflict? For those of you who said yes, why do you think you react that way? Can you pinpoint some reasons?

It may be worth talking about the concept of flight or fight here. In both the fight or flight modes the blood rushes away from your brain and toward your extremities. This is not the time to make decisions, but it is time to recognize what is happening to you and think about how best to handle it and get the blood back to your brain.