



Third Side Large Group Exercise¹

Purpose

- The purpose of this exercise is to:
 1. Demonstrate how Third Siders can use the power of questioning to help the parties re-think the situation from a Third Side perspective that incorporates all the interests involved
 2. Understand a sequence of asking questions that acknowledge the emotions people are experiencing; explore interests below feelings and positions and finally begin to generate options
 3. Simulate what it means to be the Third Side might in a given conflict situation

Context

- For this exercise you are going to use a difficult and familiar conflict to practice and experiment using the power of inquiry. The goal is to learn how questions can develop dialogue and open up options to help solve problems. The suggested area you use is: The Middle East Conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

If for some reason this is not appropriate you can feel free to pick another conflict with which people are familiar. Since the focus is to practice the power of questions (and not to solve a conflict) it is better to pick a situation which people are familiar with but not personally involved. For example, if this exercise is being done within an organization a past conflict they are struggled with or know about or did not manage well in the past could be the focus.

Overview of Exercise:

The breakdown is as follows: -- **Total time: 70 minutes**

1. Introduction and overview of exercise -- 10 minutes
2. Form three smaller groups – to each create a set of questions -- 15 minutes.
3. Practice First set of questions and debriefing – 10 minutes
4. Practice Second set of questions and debriefing – 10 minutes

¹ This was written by Joshua Weiss and Michael Marlowe. If you have comments or suggestions on it please email them to Joshua Weiss at jweiss@law.harvard.edu

5. Practice Third set of questions and debriefing -- 10 minutes
6. General comments, questions, and debriefing wrap up – 15 minutes

Overview of the exercise²

1. Introduction of material and exercise
 - a. Using the attached slides to introduce the purpose of the exercise
 - b. Explain the concept and the importance of inquiry in the role of being a Third Sider
 - c. Outline the form questions and comments can take at the different stages
2. Organize participants for the exercise
 - a. Tell the participants that you will begin by counting off 1,2,3 all around the group and getting into small groups by number
 - b. In these small groups they will be spending 15 minutes creating questions from an EMOTIONAL (Grp1), INTERESTS (Grp2) AND OPTIONS (Grp3) Perspectives
3. Ask them to look at the handouts which give samples of the different forms inquiry can take in addressing emotions, interests and options.
4. After the 15 minutes ask for 4 volunteers (one volunteer from 2 groups and 2 volunteers from a third group) They will play the role of X and Y
 - a. Since people like to know what they are volunteering you can explain:
 - i. The volunteers will listen to all the questions and pay attention to the effect the questions have on them. They will do this with each group. (they do not answer these questions)
 - ii. After each group poses questions (volunteers) the volunteers will be asked to share their impressions and observations
5. Note for the first round volunteers should sit with their backs to one another. This is to simulate how people often react when they are highly emotional. For the next 2 rounds they can face each other
6. The first small group (focused on emotional based questions) will then come up and form a circle around the parties to the conflict and ask them their questions.
 - a. Coach people to ask the questions slowly – possibly counting to five between questions. Each person should take a turn asking a question to the volunteers.
7. When the 10 minutes is up the small group will sit back down.
8. You will then debrief with the volunteers how the questions effected them.\
 - a. How were they impacted by the question?
 - b. Which questions were most effective?

² Please see appendix I below for set up of exercise depending on the number of people participating.

- c. Why was the question effective?
 - d. Did the question help shift you toward a Third Side perspective and how?
9. After the first group has asked their questions and the first debriefing has been completed the process should be repeated with the two other group focusing on the interests and options..

Large Group Debrief

- The following questions may be used, in addition to others, on the general debriefing:
 - What did you find effective about this exercise and why?
 - Having heard the types of questions that were put forth and the feedback given, is there anything we can say about what makes an effective question from a Third Side perspective?
 - For those asking the questions, what was challenging?
 - For those of you who were volunteers playing the parties, what did that feel like for you? How did you know when you heard an effective question?
 - Which type of questions seemed to be the easiest and hardest to develop and why?
 - Do you feel as though you have a better sense of how to ask Third Side questions after this exercise? Why/Why not?

Materials Needed:

- Overhead projector or LCD set up
- Copies of Third Side diagrams
- Magic markers, flip charts, flip chart stand
- 1 table, 2-6 chairs depending on size of group
- One page instructions handout for participants and sample questions.

Third Side Exercise Handout

Examples of Emotionally Based Questions

- When X happened to you what were you feeling?
- How did it feel when...?
- From what you have told me, am I correct in stating that you are feeling...?
- What phrases or other statements are hot button issues for you?
- Emotionally, what is the most difficult part of this conflict for you? Why is that?

Examples of Interest Based Questions

- What will it achieve for you if we...?
- If your position is X, what is your interest?
- You have told me what the solution is (state that here), but what is the problem you are dealing with?
- What are your key concerns?
- Help me understand why this is really important to you ...
- You say X matters ... Tell me more about that.
- Could you walk me through your interests step by step so I make sure I am clear?

Examples of Creativity (Option generation) Questions

- What are all the possibilities around X issue?
- What else might you/we try around X issue?
- What are some ways you/we could deal with this problem?
- What if we get all of the options on the table and then worry about deciding later?
- Do you have any ideas on X issue that are different than what we have discussed thus far?
- If we work together, how might we make this better for all?

Appendix I

Exercise Set Up Based on Number of Participants

Please note: These instructions can also be found in the notes pages of the accompanying PowerPoint Slides.

Exercise Set up:

Step 1:

If there are between 50-30 people have them count off by 6, between 29-10 count off by 3. Once they have done this move on to next point.

Depending on how many participants there are, below is a suggested breakdown to use for the small groups and the categories of questions the groups will be expected to address. (Only explain one of the two scenarios below!):

If there are between 50 and 30 people you will have 6 groups.

Groups 1 and 2 will be asked to develop questions to uncover the parties' interests behind their positions. Groups 3 and 4 will be asked to invent options for mutual gain and Groups 5 and 6 will be asked to focus on independent standards of fairness.

If there are between 29 and 10 people you will have three groups.

Group 1 will be asked to develop questions to uncover the parties' interests behind their positions. Group 2 will be asked to invent options for mutual gain and Group 3 will be asked to focus on independent standards of fairness.

Step 2:

Once in their groups:

You might help them by telling them that group 1 should go in that corner of the room, group 2 in this corner, etc...

Take a few moments to review the different types of questions to be generated and to answer any questions the participants may have. See 1 page sheet with generic sample questions, which mirror previous overheads. After reviewing the questions the instructor can hand out a copy of the one page sheet for the participants to refer to during the course of the exercise.

Tell the small groups that each person in the group should be prepared to ask their own questions. After each question is asked have the next person pause before asking their question. The pause adds an air of drama to the situation. Tell them they may begin.

After they have finished in their small groups:

Depending on the number of participants, the number of volunteers will vary. E.G. With a group of 30 to 50 it is reasonable to have 3 people representing one side of the conflict and 3 representing the other. With a group of 10 to 29 50 it is reasonable to have 2 people representing one side of the conflict and 2 representing the other. You should ask for these people now.

After the small groups have met and developed their questions a round table (if available) should be placed in the middle of the room. (Note: This can be set up by the instructor while the participants are in their small groups.) The chairs should be set up with their backs to the table for the first set of questions.

Step 3

Once volunteers have been selected and are seated:

The people asking the emotions questions should come up and form the inner circle around the volunteers. The people asking the interests questions should come up and form the next circle around the first circle of participants and volunteers. Finally, the people asking the creativity questions should come up and form the third circle around the participants and volunteers.

After the first round of questions and feedback the volunteers should turn their chairs around and face each other for the next two rounds.

As each group asks questions and gets feedback they should recede to the last row with the other two groups moving closer to the center. They remain in the three circles but shift their proximity to the volunteers after their questions have been asked and feedback is given.

Once all the people have gone and feedback has been given move to a general debrief.